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# ESTELLE GRANT;

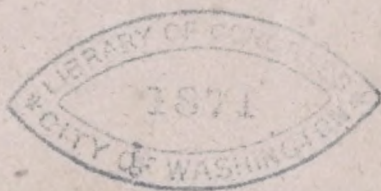
OR,

## THE LOST WIFE.

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Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;  
Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold  
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;  
Arm it in rags, a pigmy straw doth pierce it.

*Shakespeare*



NEW YORK :

GARRETT & CO., PUBLISHERS.

*Reported in Club's Office Sec. Dis  
New York November 7. 1855*

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## P R E F A C E .

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IN introducing the story of ESTELLE GRANT to the public the author does not think it necessary to say much in the way of preface, for two reasons, one of which is that he has no particular purpose to serve by going into a long preliminary discourse, and the other is that very few would pay any attention to it if he had an object, and should show it. "Men are but children of a larger growth," and either in reading or listening to a story, they are apt to grow impatient at circumlocution, and to wish that the narrator would "come to the point" at once—a quality of mind which was well exemplified in the case of the sailor who grew tired of Mr. Macready's frequent demands for the handkerchief when addressing Desdemona, in the character of the jealous Moor, and who at length called upon the tragedian to adopt the method generally resorted to by juveniles when troubled with catarrh, and let the play proceed. Keeping this fact in view, the author will be as brief as possible with this portion of his task, feeling satisfied that by so doing he will not only save himself labor, but avoid the danger of tiring his readers at the same time.

There are few narratives even among those drawn from the captivating store-house of fiction, and touched up with the cunning skill of a Dickens, a Dumas, or a Sue, which possesses greater interest than the exciting story of

“The Lost Wife,” drawn, although it is from real life, and destitute of all coloring other than that which a rounding up, as it were, of rough edges, and the successful linking together of a concatenation of circumstances render necessary. The characters introduced are pen and ink portraits of real persons, most of whom may be regarded as types of their different classes, and some of whom are yet living, and will either swear or weep over these pages as the case may be. One of these latter parties the author was obliged early in the story to *kill*, but the homicide should be regarded as entirely justifiable, not only because the individual was unfit to live, but because his death was necessary to the lucid pointing out of a most excellent moral.

It is always a more gratifying task to the correct-minded and benevolent writer to discourse of virtue and its reward than of vice and its punishment; still wickedness and wrong should be exposed, that the unwary may be warned of its snares and arts. The world should be made to know that all are not pure who assume the saintly garb of Christianity, and that even among the outcasts of society there is many a noble heart crushed beneath the iron heel of a class of as heartless oppressors, under the cloak of religion, as the Great Creator of the Universe ever permitted to exist on his footstool, to mar the beauty and harmony of his creations. The worm will turn if trampled upon, and that deep sense of wrong which has a place in every human breast, will often rankle in the hearts of the injured and oppressed till it takes the shape of criminal vengeance, and before we harshly condemn the errors of a brother or sister, we ought to know the history of the offence and the cause which led to it. The poor suicides who end life by poison, the knife, the pistol

or by a plunge into the dark waters of the ocean, have each a fearful history of his or her own, which, to the world, is, in most instances, a sealed book, which, if opened, would draw tears of sympathy to moisten their premature graves from the eyes of all to whom the revelation was made. The author does not wish to offer any apology, however, for the dreadful crimes of which his heroine was guilty—he merely wishes to draw attention to the fact that she might, under different circumstances, have been a different woman, and to urge upon those whose mission it is to search after and reclaim the erring and depraved, the necessity of a more thorough organization in the prosecution of their labor of love. Let them exert themselves night and day to unmask those wolves in sheep's clothing who are too often, alas! to be found in their midst—let them also extend their saving influence far and wide—let their beneficent arms encircle the homeless and the outcast in every section of our sin-laden city—let them penetrate the dark alley-ways where no sunlight enters, the subterranean abodes reeking with filth, the noisome dens in pestiferous courts, the homes of the wretched everywhere—to the end that the lost may be found, and the sick made whole. One great object of this book is to show the contrast between virtue and vice—the beauty of the former, and the hideousness of the latter—to confirm the pure of heart in their purity, and to warn those who stand upon the verge of danger to fly while there is yet time. That the day may speedily arrive when less real incident for the ground work of such a book as *this* can be found, is the sincere wish of the public's most humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

# THE LOST WIFE.

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## CHAPTER I.

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IN the summer of 18— I went to spend a few weeks with a wealthy old gentleman residing in one of the most beautiful of the numerous lovely towns lying along the line of the poetry-inspiring Hudson. It was from no desire of my own that I did so, as rural scenes have few charms for me—in fact the charge recently made against Fanny Fern by an English writer, viz., that she ‘had not a country hair in her head,’ would apply to me exactly—but the old gentleman aforesaid had been a fast friend of my father’s, and had been one of my sponsors in baptism—this he thought, as my parents were both dead, gave him the right occasionally to demand of me a visit, which he often did, and I never neglected to attend when he thus summoned me, as was the case at the time of which I am writing.

There are few towns within a hundred miles of New York that are more frequented during the dog-days, than the beautiful one of —, a fact which rendered it rather more endu-

rable to me than though it had been of the ultra-rural order. I would most always meet with somebody from New York with whom I was acquainted, and it not unfrequently happened that I met whole parties, in which latter case I was not at a loss for amusement.

My sponsor, whose real name it is not necessary for the purposes of this story to give, I shall call Miller, was a bluff, hearty, jolly old bachelor, about sixty years of age, who having made money enough to retire from business, had settled in ——, determined to take the world easy for the rest of his days. The only persons in his household were his housekeeper, (an eccentric old maid) and a negro boy, who acted in the double capacity of house-servant and hostler.

‘Well, Harry, my boy,’ said the old gentleman, as we sat on the piazza, each enjoying a cheroot, shortly after my arrival, ‘I’m rejoiced to see you looking so well—shows you’ve taken care of yourself—you haven’t been here now since summer before last, and I hope you won’t be in such a hurry as usual to get away again. You ought to be able to enjoy yourself here for a few weeks very comfortably—plenty of company—numberless beautiful drives—an excellent pleasure boat, and plenty of first-rate fishing.’

‘I dare say I shall be able to pass the time very agreeably,’ I replied, ‘if I do not I am satisfied it will be my own fault. But what’s new here? Has anything extraordinary happened since I was here last?’

‘Extraordinary!’ echoed the old gentleman, ‘No—I hate extraordinary things—nothing of an extraordinary nature has ever happened here that I am aware of. Stop, now I come to think of it, something a *little* extraordinary has happened here within the last year.’

‘And what is that?’ questioned I, eagerly.

‘Why,’ said he, ‘a girl has taken the whole town by storm—that is, the masculine portion of it—she is young, accomplished and beautiful—there is not a youngster in the place

but would break his neck for her—and yet the talk is that her father intends to force her to marry a man she don't love. Everybody says she is a fine, modest, amiable girl, and yet she is not to make her own choice of a husband. That's what I call extraordinary. At least, if it ain't, it ought to be.'

'What is the name of this to-be-sacrificed divinity?' I inquired, laughingly.

'Her name is Grant—Estelle Grant. Her father moved here with his family not quite a year since, and it is rumored that the girl is to be married some time this summer to the smooth-faced, oily-looking and wealthy deacon Emory.'

'He that gave a thousand dollars to the mission fund when I was up here last?' said I, inquiringly.

'Yes,' replied the old gentleman, 'and took good care that the fact found its way into the columns of every available newspaper.'

'Well,' said I, 'I should think he would make a sorry-looking bridegroom for anybody. You must know him pretty well, by this time; is he the hypocrite that many here give him the credit of being?'

'Well, the fact is,' replied the old gentleman, 'I cannot speak of my own knowledge. I think it would be hard to *prove* any thing against him. He bears an excellent character. That is, he owns a pew in church, attends divine service regularly three times on the Sabbath, and all that sort of thing; but then he's too austere; never laughs, never smiles, even; never sings—never dances—never does anything that a true Christian, in my opinion, should do occasionally, and I don't like him. I believe he's a hypocrite—I may be mistaken. I hope I am; but that's my opinion, and I can't help it. But you'll see her and him both, it's altogether likely, before you go away, and you can judge for yourself. As for me, I don't pretend to be any judge of character: that is, I have no set rule for judging a man or woman either. I've been mistaken so often in my life, that I've dropped the habit of judging physiognomically or

phrenologically, and depend entirely upon my impressions; these lead me to dislike both Emory and Mr. Grant, the girl's father; but I do like the girl herself, and think it's a hard case she should be sacrificed. She's in the habit of coming here frequently. I have some rare exotics in the garden, of which she is rather fond, and she often calls in to admire them. But there's the bell, and now let's in to tea.'

It was only two days following this conversation with my matter-of-fact, good-hearted old sponsor, that I saw this paragon of whom report spoke so highly. I had prepared myself to take a short drive, and while the negro boy Tom was getting the vehicle in readiness, I thought I would take a stroll through the garden. As I walked leisurely along, admiring the floral beauties which greeted me on every side, I heard voices just ahead of me in a little recess which shot out from the avenue I was threading. I thought nothing of it at first, but continued my walk in that direction, when, just before I reached the spot alluded to, my old friend and a young lady, who followed close behind him, came directly across my path.

'Ah, Harry, well met, my boy. This is Miss Grant—Miss Grant, my scape-grace god-son Harry——.'

She acknowledged my presence by a graceful bend of her beautiful neck and blushed deeply as the old gentleman introduced her. She was then about instantly to take her departure, but the old gentleman cut off her retreat by playfully blocking the passage, and remarked in a tone of pleasantry—

'Don't run away, Miss Grant—Harry won't hurt you. He is as harmless as a school-boy, although he does hail from that terrible city, New York. You haven't spent half your usual time in examining your favorite flowers. Do stay and explain their beauties to my god-son. He is a perfect ignoramus on the subject of floriculture, and will thank you I know.'

'I must plead guilty to the charge which my god-father so bluntly prefers,' said I, for the first time addressing the beautiful creature, who in her confusion was endeavoring to adjust

a small *boquet* of fragrant flowers which she held in her hand, 'but it is more my misfortune than my fault. Having been reared in the city, I have never examined a collection of rare plants except at yearly exhibitions, and then I have had no competent person to point out to me their chief beauties. I am sure, though, I should prove an apt scholar under Miss Grant's tuition.'

'Mr. Miller is pleased to give me credit for more knowledge than I really possess in this regard,' she replied timidly as she raised her large, sparkling orbs to mine—'I am but a poor judge of flowers myself, although I dearly love to cultivate and be among them. At present, however, I must be going, for I have already staid longer than I had intended and my father will be expecting me,' and dropping a graceful curtsy she took her leave.

It seemed as though a bright, fresh-looking, exquisite picture, drawn by one of the old masters, had been suddenly taken from my view when she passed out of the garden, so brilliant, so glorious did she seem in her almost unearthly beauty, and when the sound of her light foot-fall had died away, I stood buried in profound thought like one entranced. I was aroused from my silent attitude by a loud laugh from my god-father, who merrily slapping me upon the shoulder exclaimed—

'One more victim to the charms of Estelle Grant. One more heart cleft in twain by the shaft of the Boy-God! Is she not beautiful, Harry? Egad, I don't know but I should have fallen in love myself if I had met her, or a damsel like her, forty years ago!'

'She *is* beautiful!' sighing in spite of myself, as I took my way towards the vehicle, which the black boy had informed me was in readiness.

The time between my first meeting with Estelle Grant and that fixed upon for her marriage with Everard Emory was brief, but it was sufficiently long for me to become intimately

acquainted with, and to gain a complete knowledge of her character. When I first visited — it was my intention to stay but a few weeks at most, but while in her society, time had for me a greater value than ever before, and I took no heed of the days, weeks and months, as they rapidly flew by. I forgot all about New York, and thought that with Estelle for a companion I should never wish to change my location. I managed to meet her very often in the old gentleman's garden previous to her hateful marriage. Indeed, I not only managed to meet her often, but with all the ardor of a youth of twenty-one, in spite of myself I fell desperately in love with her, although I learned from her own lips before our acquaintance ended, that there was not the slightest possibility of my passion ever meeting with a return. She was of an open, social, ingenuous nature, and seemed to take naturally to me, *as a brother*. I was certain that she had not a particle of love, or even of respect, for the man to whom she was on the point of being tied for life—not only from what my god-father had said, but from her own actions. This gave me a ray of hope—and when a youth of twenty-one, who is deeply in love, obtains a *ray* of hope, it is not long before his sanguine nature magnifies it into a perfect flood of sunshine. Accordingly I turned the matter over in my mind, and settled upon my course of action. I would declare my love, I would propose an elopement, I would tear her from the grasp of her iron-hearted parent by force if necessary, and break the head of Everard Emory if he dared to interfere—I would take her to New York in triumph—I would appear before my friends as the happiest husband of the best and prettiest wife in the world—all this would I have done, but for one very important fact, which was merely that such a thing was impossible, for just as I was about confessing to her that I was dying for her sake, she opened her whole heart to me. She confessed that she was forced to marry Emory against her inclinations. She was the victim of circumstances over which she had no control.

She never could endure, much less love her intended husband, for her heart was plighted to another—one whom she had known from childhood.

Let me not dwell upon the subject. Estelle Grant was married to Everard Emory, in the presence of a perfect blaze of beauty and fashion. She was offered up a sacrifice upon the altar of mammon—match-making mothers and money-getting fathers said it was an excellent alliance. Emory stood high in the community. He was a model man. His morals were unexceptionable, and his wealth boundless. Estelle should consider herself fortunate in securing such a match. She should be the happiest of women. Should she? We shall see.

I did not witness the marriage, although invited to be present. I could not do so. The sight would have been gall and wormwood to me, but I staid in — till the ceremony was performed, and then I returned to New York and to business.

## CHAPTER II.

Two years had passed after the marriage of Estelle, during the whole of which time I had never once visited my old godfather, although I corresponded with him regularly. In almost every letter which I received from him he had something to say about Estelle and the effect upon her mind and disposition which the alliance into which she had been forced had produced. She had one child—a son—and the old gentleman gave me to understand that her nature had totally changed—that I would not know her—that Estelle Emory was no more like Estelle Grant than day was like night. His remarks to this effect kept growing more and more pointed, till at length one day the postman put into my hand the following characteristic epistle from the old gentleman :

‘DEAR HARRY : The jig is up at last. The bird has flown. Estelle Emory, whose life, since her marriage, seems to have been a perfect hell, left here last night, and has gone no one knows whither, though it is surmised that she fled to New York. She took her infant with her, and was accompanied in her flight by the servant girl, who seems to have changed, with her mistress, into a perfect devil. If you should see her in New York, Harry, do not let harm come to her—watch over her as you would over a sister. I feel almost as great an affection for her as though she was my daughter, and would go a great way to serve her. But don’t prevail upon her to come back; I don’t think that would be doing her a kindness. Only

don't let her become the victim of any of the despicable characters who literally swarm in New York. Search for her at once, my dear boy, and if you find her, advise me instantly. God bless you! Your affectionate god-father.'

Poor old man! He never learned anything of her fate, for it was not long after her flight that he was called upon to pay that debt which all must sooner or later pay. He died leaving me his sole heir.

His death, however, did not prevent my searching after Estelle. Day after day, and month after month, I was constantly on the alert, and although some facts of a startling nature concerning her and the companion of her flight, came to my knowledge, I could learn nothing of her whereabouts, and at length I became satisfied that she was either dead, or had, in her desire to get as far as possible from her husband, taken passage for Europe.

While industriously looking after information concerning the victim of parental cupidity, I made the acquaintance of a member of the police department, whom I shall call Fred Fox—a fearless, good-natured, garrulous fellow, always active in his profession; a man of keen perception, a first-rate judge of character, and perfectly willing at all times to furnish me with the fullest particulars of every case which came under his observation. This last fact led me to take up my abode in his family, in order that I might have the full benefit of his experience, and that I might also have a better opportunity of listening to his narrations. Many a long winter's evening, when Fred was off duty, have I passed beneath his roof. Seated near him, with eyes, ears and mouth all open at the same time, I have listened, as Desdemona devoured up the discourse of Othello, to his recital of his experience during many years' service as a policeman, wherein he, too, spoke of 'hair-breath 'scapes by flood and field' in the pursuit of thieves on the East River and in their city haunts.

Fred Fox *could* relate a *real* incident with effect, and the

subjects which had come under his observation were as various as the colors in a kaleidoscope. This gave him a companionable quality which to me was invaluable, and as he witnessed my intense pleasure while listening to him, he was the more willing to gratify me. By turns he would awaken my keenest sorrow, by a tale of suffering—arouse my indignation by a story of persecution and wrong, and convulse me with laughter by a description of some ludicrous scene. Besides this, he kept me posted up with regard to every singular affair that transpired at his station, and I looked upon him as my second self.

Things had been rather dull with us, (Fred and myself,) for some time—that is, not exactly dull, for dullness could never exist where Fred was, but then no recent occurrences of interest had transpired—nothing beyond the usual items of brutal assaults and fatal accidents, burglaries, etc. Things had remained in this state for some time I say, when Fred (who often took me with him when he had a case on hand which he thought would interest me,) came rushing into my room in a state of considerable excitement; and before I could question him as to the cause thereof, he exclaimed in a hurried manner, as he laid his hand upon my shoulder—

‘Come, Mr. ——! Come along with me. I’ve just left a person that you’d like to see, I know. Come along—’taint far!’

‘What is the sex of the person, Fred?’ I inquired, ‘male or female?’

‘O, it’s a woman,’ was his reply, ‘come!’

‘Have I ever seen her?’ I asked.

‘Don’t know,” he answered, ‘guess not—she’s a queer customer—looks as if she might a’ been top o’ the heap at one time, but she’s gone under now. She told me she had something on her mind she’d like to make known, but she wouldn’t tell it to a policeman—she wouldn’t reveal it to anybody but a *gentleman*—that was flattering, wasn’t it?’

‘Rather,’ I answered, as I arose to accompany him—‘but

where did you come across this fastidious female, Fred? Who is she? Did you arrest her for theft, or vagrancy, or what?

‘I didn’t arrest her at all,’ replied Fred; ‘you see, I’ll tell you how it was. Last night a countryman was robbed by some woman who picked him up while he was rather oblivious and took him to a crib in Mulberry street. He couldn’t remember the house nor even the neighborhood—all he could recollect was that it was in Mulberry street. Now there are a number of places in that locality which are not over respectable, and as the countryman engaged me to look after his property—a watch and some money—I naturally turned my face in that direction. I couldn’t find either the thief or the property, but in the last crib I went into—a house with a good many tenants in it—I came across the woman I told you about, in one of the rooms. She was lying on a cot in one corner of the apartment, and at first I thought she was dead—she was so motionless and looked so white—but I soon found out my mistake, for, as I walked towards her, she gave a hollow cough and looked up at me. A miserable, ragged, dirty-looking Irish woman was sitting at her bed dozing, and on my touching her on the shoulder, she looked up and growled out, ‘What do you want here?’ I remembered this woman as soon as I looked at her—I had often noticed her going into the pawn-shop on my beat, and although I always thought she was a bad one, I never caught her at anything criminal. ‘What’s the matter with that woman?’ I enquired, and as I did so, the invalid half raised herself upon one arm, and, in a voice that almost frightened me from its hollowness, answered, before her attendant had a chance to—‘What’s that to you? What right have you in this room? It’s mine—the rent for it is paid in advance—leave it!’ and as she finished, she broke into a fit of coughing, which, for a time, I was afraid would prove fatal to her—it was so very violent. I felt sorry for the woman, for, although I didn’t like her countenance, she looked

to me as though she had been used to better things, so to pacify her, I explained to her that I was in search of a thief, and when I got through, I asked the Irish woman if any doctor had visited the invalid? 'No,' was the reply, 'I wanted her to have one from the Dispensary, but she wouldn't let me fetch him.' 'No,' broke in the sick woman, faintly, 'I want no doctor—I shall soon be past the want of assistance from anybody, but I'll tell you what I do want—I wish to speak with a gentleman!' 'What gentleman?' I enquired. '*Any* gentleman,' was her reply, 'any *real* gentleman by birth and education—I am a *lady*, and I will say what I have to say to none but a gentleman—if you can and will fetch such a person, do it quickly, or you will be too late.' To conclude, I knew the case would suit you exactly,' concluded Fred, 'so I hurried as fast as possible to let you know, and now if you wish we will go at once.'

I needed no further pressing, and in another moment we were out doors and proceeding at a brisk pace towards our destination. We were not long in reaching Mulberry street, into which we turned, and after walking some blocks further, Fred stopped at the entrance to a long, dingy looking alley, and remarked, in an undertone, 'This is the place—come along!'

I must own to a somewhat disagreeable feeling as I followed my guide up that dreary-looking and horrid-smelling avenue, but I had made up my mind to pursue the adventure to the end, so I proceeded without a remark. The alley terminated in a large court filled with rough-built five-story brick houses, not one of which could boast an entire window sash, while the stench arising from the decaying animal and vegetable matter which choked up the filthy cess-pools around was almost overpowering. 'Here is the room we seek,' said Fred, as he drew up at one of these pest-holes, and knocked at the door of an apartment on the first floor. 'Come in!' cried a woman's voice, in a gruff tone.

'That's the Irish woman,' whispered Fred, as he opened the door, and we entered.

If the exterior view of the unsavory place was uninviting, the interior view was still more so. The room was exceedingly dirty and almost destitute of furniture, which consisted only of two rickety old stools, one of them minus a leg, an old pine table, warped, cracked, and disjointed—the miserable cot upon which the sick woman lay, a strip of old rag carpet, and a broken furnace, which stood in the dilapidated fire place. A bundle of straw which served for the bed of the invalid's attendant, was spread in one corner. The floor was thick with dirt, and in three different places rat-holes might be seen, into each of which a piece of brick had been stuck as a protection against the egress of the long-tailed intruders. The whole place had more the appearance of a pig-sty than a dwelling-place for human beings, and a ray of sunlight which struggled through one of the broken window panes, and rested in a small patch upon the dirtiest portion of the floor, seemed through contrast to render the place still more gloomy.

The Irish woman who had bade us 'Come in,' sat by the bed-side of the sick woman, upon one of the two stools. She looked up as we entered, and as her crazy-looking, blood-shot eyes rested upon Fred, she uttered a subdued 'hush!' and pointing to the bed, she continued, 'The mistress is ashlape—don't wake her!' My mind was so taken up with the invalid that upon entering I had scarcely looked at her attendant, but I now turned my eyes toward her with the intention of scrutinizing her features closely. This privilege was denied me, however, for, as soon as she had spoken, she buried her face in her hands, and remained silent. The sick woman lay asleep, with her face toward the wall, but her slumber was evidently not sound, for occasionally she moved uneasily upon her wretched bed, and ever and anon an exclamation of suffering—half sigh and half groan—escaped her.

'Here is the gentleman she wished to see,' said Fred, touching the attendant upon the shoulder.

'Go 'way wid yez!' was the impatient reply. 'Can't yez come again? It's not often she shlapes.'

'Yes, Fred,' said I, in a subdued tone, 'let's come again some other time; perhaps it would be better not to awaken the woman.'

Scarcely had I spoken, when the invalid awoke, and groaning heavily, turned herself with an effort in the bed. For an instant she lay with her face toward us, but with her eyes still closed. Presently, with a heavy sigh, she slowly opened them, and, with a bewildered stare, they rested full upon me.

'Kate, what do these people want?' she said, in a hollow tone, addressing the Irish woman, but without withdrawing her gaze from me.

'You said you wished to see a gentleman,' replied Fred Fox, stepping forward, 'and at your request I have brought this one.'

'O, yes, I had forgotten,' said the sick woman, languidly; 'I did wish to see a gentleman—but I must be satisfied that he is a gentleman—one who has feeling in his heart, and can understand, and appreciate, and not a mere picker-up of stray items—before I can make a confidant of him. What is your name, sir?' she abruptly enquired; 'for there is something in a name—I am satisfied of that.'

'Harry ——,' I replied, willing to humor her, and at the mention of my name a still deeper crimson was added to the hectic flush which rested upon her cheek; 'and now,' I continued, 'I suppose I may take the same privilege, and ask what your name is?'

'A knowledge of my name,' she replied, 'can advantage you nothing, but since you wish to know it, I will tell you—Julia Graham.' She paused for a while, as if to gain strength, and I could see, that although she strove hard to conceal it, she was from some cause or other terribly excited. I noticed,

also, that her Irish attendant was fairly aroused, and with head bent forward, was listening eagerly. Presently she jumped from her stool as though she had been shot. For a moment she seemed paralyzed, and then coming close to me she gazed eagerly in my face. Suddenly she cried, in a voice of tremor, as though addressing some one else—

‘It is him; and he has a policeman wid him, too. Well, then, me time is come, and if yez want Kate O’Donnell yez must look for her in purgathory!’ and dashing by us, she flew out of the door with the speed of a frightened hare.

It was evident that the parties knew me, although I had no recollection of them; and, in order to aid my memory, I bent over the invalid, and scrutinized her features closely. Suddenly, as I revolved the past over in my mind, retrospection brought up circumstances that had happened long years before, and a light broke in upon me. ‘Can it be possible!’ I involuntarily exclaimed, as I fancied I recognized in her one whom I had known under far different circumstances.

‘Shall I follow and arrest the Irish woman?’ questioned Fred, who seemed perfectly dumfounded at the turn affairs had taken.

‘No,’ said I, ‘let her go; her arrest would answer no purpose, and her escape can do no harm; but a conversation with the sick woman is all-important to me.’

‘This is no dream,’ said the invalid abstractedly, as she slowly revived, and raised herself, by an effort, in the bed; ‘you are real flesh and blood, are you not? Come here, let me touch you!’

I went close to her, and she laid her hand upon my shoulder—

‘I heard you were dead,’ she continued, ‘or I never should have come back to this city. However, I’m glad I did come. It was not my wish to see you, but now that we have met I am not sorry for it. Tell me, does that man (pointing to Fred) know anything of my history?’

I answered in the negative.

‘Then,’ she continued, ‘request him to leave us together. I have much to say to you, and a short time to say it in. I do not wish him to hear it;—not that I am fearful of the law—no, no! I shall soon be in a stronger, darker, and more enduring cell than any in the Centre street Tombs; but I do not wish a third person present. Tell him to go.’

I took Fred aside, and requested him to leave us.

‘You know her, then?’ said he, enquiringly.

‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘she is an old acquaintance of mine.’

‘Strange,’ returned Fred, with a puzzled air; ‘I don’t remember that you ever spoke to me of any one resembling her.’

‘No,’ said I, evasively; ‘it is a long story, Fred, and I have learned but half of it myself yet. Some other time I will enlighten you, but at present leave us together.’

‘I don’t half like the idea,’ was Fred’s reply, ‘the sick woman can’t hurt you, I know, but how about the Irish woman who just left? She’s a bad one, if there’s anything in appearances—and if you possess any secret which is likely to affect her, she may return with assistance, and work an impediment in your speech.’

‘Don’t be at all alarmed about that,’ said I, ‘you may rest assured she will not make her appearance here again—at least so long as I remain.’

Thus assured, Fred took one last look at the invalid, and departed, while I drew up a chair close to the bed, and listened to the recital of a story, the details of which even now cause a thrill of horror to creep over me, and is well calculated to prove the verity of the oft quoted axiom that ‘Truth is stranger than fiction.’

## CHAPTER III.

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Before entering fairly into the eventful history of Estelle Grant, it may perhaps be proper to state that the writer (who will himself figure occasionally as one of the *dramatis personæ*) did not obtain all his facts from the wretched creature, whom, at the close of the last chapter, he left lying upon a sick bed in the Mulberry street hovel. On the contrary, the particulars which furnish the material for the whole story were obtained at considerable trouble and expense from the principal characters introduced, the writer having travelled hundreds of miles for the purpose of procuring an interview with first one and then another of them, after his conversation with the miserable woman, whose candidly spoken, but fearful statements, furnished him with a clue to the whereabouts of many with whom she had come in contact. Having stated thus much in explanation, the writer will now proceed to weave his rough notes, taken at different times, into the woof of a 'plain, unvarnished tale.'

Some years ago, when the cry of 'Westward Ho!' was in almost everybody's mouth, and the tide of emigration was flowing rapidly in the direction of the principal Western towns, an English family, named Grant, settled in St. Louis, Mo. The head of the family, Edward Grant, was a man about 45 years of age, who, having failed as a cotton manufacturer in Manchester, England, had, with the help of his wife's relatives, collected a considerable sum of money, and determined to try his fortune in the New World. Accordingly, he took passage

for New York, where he arrived safely with his wife and two daughters, but after looking about for a few days in search of a fair opening for the investment of his capital, he became dissatisfied with the Empire City, and was finally induced by a person whose acquaintance he had made at the hotel at which he put up, to embark in the mercantile business in St. Louis. This new-made acquaintance, whose name was Everard Emory, gave Mr. Grant to understand that he had an interest in a large establishment in the above town—that the trade was a very lucrative one—and that if he wished, there was an opening for him in the same concern. Emory was a smooth-faced, genteel-looking, fair-spoken young man, and Mr. Grant, after numerous conversations, closed with him, and bearing with him the necessary papers and a letter of introduction to the firm, he soon after reached St. Louis, as above stated, and having located his family in a comfortable residence, a few miles from the city, at once commenced business.

Although strictly honest, Edward Grant did not possess a very amiable character. He was a proud, selfish, aristocratic man, whose ruling characteristics were stubbornness and self-esteem. Among strangers he was cold and formal, while towards those connected with him in business, he evinced a haughty demeanor and a dictatorial spirit, which could brook no control. He wished that in all things his word should be law, and was always dissatisfied if such was not the case. In his business relations he was exacting and unreasonable, while at home he was a domestic tyrant. Love had no part in his composition. He would rather enforce obedience by stern looks and harsh words than to draw it forth by loving expressions and kind actions. As is too often the case, fate had willed that his life-companion should be as opposite to himself in disposition as possible, and his wife was a most amiable and sweet-tempered lady. She possessed a kind, affectionate and uncomplaining nature, and though the harsh looks and unjust fault-finding of her husband caused her many a pang, she

bore it patiently, and never allowed a murmur to escape her lips. Continual dropping, however, will wear away a stone, and eighteen years' companionship with a spirit so uncongenial to her own as was that of her husband, had not been without its effect upon her—care and hidden grief had worn her almost to a shadow, even before she left England, but when at length she was forced to abandon home and its endearing associations, the last drop was added to her cup of bitterness, and every day the fact that she was not long to remain an inhabitant of earth grew more and more apparent. Before three months had rolled over her in her western home, she had ceased to exist. She died in giving birth to another daughter.

It was not till some time after the grave had been closed upon her, that her husband was able fully to realize his loss, and even then he did not give expression to any regret, nor did the event have any softening effect upon his harsh nature. On the contrary, he grew, if possible, more morose, more overbearing, more tyrannical than ever.

Troubles never come singly, and pecuniary difficulties quickly followed the death of Mr. Grant's estimable wife. He was not a shrewd business man, and the fact soon became apparent that in following the advice of Mr. Emory he had not used proper circumspection. So far from paying him a handsome profit, he found, upon a close examination of his affairs, that he was rapidly going behindhand, and the worst feature of the case was that he could not withdraw his capital. He did not attach any blame to Emory, who had apparently acted from the best motives, and from whom he occasionally received a letter speaking very encouragingly, and urging him to hold on, assuring him (and giving facts and figures to back his assurance) that affairs would speedily take a more favorable turn. The 'favorable turn,' however, did not come, and affairs kept growing worse and worse.

Fanny and Florence Grant, the two elder daughters of the merchant, were much like their father in disposition. They

were rather comely children in appearance, but were both proud and self-willed, and after their mother's death they threw off what little restraint her presence had imposed upon them and made the household as unpleasant as possible. When both were present, Florence, the youngest, was forced to yield to Fanny's authority, but when Fanny was absent, Florence would move around the house in the most dignified manner, and issue her orders to the domestics with the air of an empress. Powerful was the indignation felt in the kitchen when the cook, a fat, jolly-looking mulatto woman, a great favorite of the deceased lady, considered her rights invaded by Fanny Grant, who undertook to give her some instruction concerning culinary matters; and intense was the anger of the house-servant when directed to perform some duty which she had never in her life been known to neglect. They dared not, however, give expression to the angry thoughts which filled them in the presence of their superiors, but when they got together, and there was no one near to hear or see them, the way in which opinions were freely expressed, the whites of eyes rolled up, and significant gestures indulged in, would have astonished the parties whose arbitrary actions called them forth, could they have witnessed them.

The two sisters would gladly have brought the entire establishment under their rule, could they have done so; but, unfortunately for them, there were two persons whom they were forced to approach with respect. The first was their father, and the next the housekeeper, a dignified, matronly woman, a native of Pennsylvania, who entered the family just previous to the death of Mrs. Grant, and who, after that event, was entrusted with the sole charge of the motherless little one, who had been named Estelle, after her deceased parent.

Notwithstanding the loss of her natural protector, little Estelle, under the fostering care of Mrs. Dunscomb, grew finely, and everybody who saw her was forced to admit that a more

sprightly, bright-faced little creature never drew breath. Such encomiums pleased the good-hearted nurse vastly, for she was proud of her little charge—as proud, indeed, as though she had been her own daughter. But if she loved the little Estelle, her dislike for the two elder girls was in a corresponding degree. As has already been stated, they were forced to treat her with respect—their father exacted this from them, for, though of an unamiable nature himself, he was not so blind but that he could discover the virtues of others. He liked the nurse he had procured for his infant; she was somewhat independent, to be sure, and did not look upon him with that awe which he thought his presence should inspire, still, she studied his wants closely, and, in all but her appreciation of his dignity she suited him exactly, and he did not wish to lose her services. She had told him candidly when she first entered his service she would not be meddled with in the performance of her duties, and he, knowing full well what elicited the remark, summoned his daughters at once, and, in Mrs. Dunscomb's presence charged them strictly not to interfere with her in any particular. This action on the part of their father was of course not calculated to increase the liking of the girls for the housekeeper, and although they dared not openly offend her, they subjected her to a series of petty annoyances day after day which led her in the end cordially to detest them. The fact that Mrs. Dunscomb was so fond of Estelle was another source of annoyance to the girls, who found in it a sufficient reason to dislike the little innocent, and on that account they never played with and seldom looked at her unless it was to make some such remark as, 'homely little thing!'—'it don't look a bit like any of family!'—'it's as cross as it can be!' etc., etc. To such remarks the matron would turn a deaf ear, and only press the child closer to her breast, or if she did venture a reply it would be to the effect that they had nothing to brag of on the score of beauty—that she was glad the baby did not resemble them whoever else it might favor, and that if they

did not wish to hear it cry they were not obliged to stay where it was.

Thus things went on for some eight years, in the course of which time Estelle had grown to be a fine lively child, with large lustrous black eyes, flowing dark ringlets, and a face full of expression. She was of a strange disposition. She seemed to partake somewhat of the character of both her father and mother. In her little heart her mother's affectionate nature seemed to mingle with her father's pride and self-will; and, although the love principle was always active whenever there was anything to draw it forth, still she was keenly alive to insult and injury, and, when excited thereby, showed an intensity of hatred to the object of her wrath that was almost frightful to witness in one so young and usually so mild and yielding. Her nurse viewed this singularity of character with much concern, for she saw in it the evidence of great danger if allowed to run unchecked. To her Estelle never had, even in her most petulant mood, showed other than her angel side. However great her rage, or however deep her grief, it needed but a word from Mrs. Dunscomb, and almost immediately every appearance of anger would vanish, and a bright, sunny smile would shine through the storm of grief. The nurse ruled her by love. She had never in her life spoken a harsh word to her, and yet she held her under the most complete subjection. She was the only mother the child had ever known, and, O, how the little creature loved her! With all the deep devotion of her wild-throbbing tumultuous infant heart, she clung to her as her first and dearest friend, and would scarcely look at or speak to any one else. She did not love her father, for he never played with, or told her stories, or kissed her, as the nurse did. He hadn't time—he was too full of business—so she didn't love him, although she tried hard to do so, for the nurse told her she must love him. She didn't love her sisters either, for they were always teasing her, and sometimes the poor child would wish she had no sisters, or any other

relative or friend except the one who had always been kind to her.

‘Nurse,’ said the child, one day, after Mrs. Dunscomb had been lecturing her upon her favorite theme, ‘why must I love Pa, and Fanny, and Florence? They don’t love me. Pa don’t play with me like you do, and Fanny and Florence are always teasing me. I believe they love to see me cry, and I’m sure I don’t see why I should love them.’

‘Because,’ answered the nurse, mildly, ‘God won’t love you if you don’t love them. You must love them even if they hate you. You must learn to love everybody.’

‘But I *can’t* love anybody who hates me. Whenever anybody provokes me, I can’t help hating them. I’ve tried ever so many times, just to please you, but, even when I’m trying the hardest I feel my face burn so, and my heart beats so fast, and I feel as though I should die if I didn’t let them see how I hated them.’

‘You will never go to Heaven, where your mamma is, if you feel that way, Estelle—you must pray to have your heart altered, every night, and strive every day, and as you grow bigger you will grow better.’

For a moment Estelle regarded her kind foster-mother with a sorrowful expression of countenance, and at length she sank at her feet and burying her tiny face in the good woman’s lap she wept bitterly.

‘Don’t cry, love,’ said the nurse, as she soothingly passed her fingers through the child’s glossy curls—‘don’t cry—what ails my darling?’ and gently raising the little sorrowing face to her own, she imprinted a warm, motherly kiss upon the soft, peach-like cheek.

‘O, nurse,’ sobbed Estelle, ‘I am afraid I can never be a good girl—but I will try—indeed, indeed I will. It is no trouble for me to be good when I am with you, for I love you very, very much, and you love me, I know,’—then suddenly checking her grief, and wiping the tears from her beautiful

face, she continued, 'I wish you, James Ely, and I, could go to sea in a big ship, like Robinson Crusoe did, and be cast away on some island where there would be nobody but us three—then I could be good, and go to Heaven when I died, for I should have nobody to make me bad.'

'Who is James Ely, darling?' questioned the nurse.

'Why, nurse,' said the little creature, now all smiles, and holding up her hands in astonishment, 'have you forgotten already? Don't you remember I told you about the little boy who lives next door, who goes to our school, and who always takes my part when the children attempt to plague me? I didn't think you'd forget *him*!'

'O, yes, I recollect now, dear,' replied the nurse, smiling, 'but you never told me what his name was before, and so I did not know to whom you alluded.'

'O, he is such a good boy!' said Estelle, delightedly—'he does everything he can to please me, and yet Florence says I shan't play with him, because his father is a poor man. This morning he made me such a beautiful bouquet, and threw it over the fence to me, and just as I was about to pick it up and thank him for it, Florence snatched it out of my hand and threw it back again, and called him a little beggar, and told him to keep his flowers to himself!' and when she had got thus far, Estelle paused, for she found the wicked spirit gaining the mastery over her again. A large tear shone in each eye, her face was suffused with indignation, and her little bosom throbbed tumultuously.

'And what did you say to Florence, love?' questioned her foster-mother.

'I said and did what I know you will say was wicked,' replied the child; 'I told her that she was a beggar herself, and that I hated her, and when I said all I could I seized hold of the skirt of her dress, and tried with all my might to tear it off.'

'That was very, very naughty,' said the nurse, reprovingly, 'and you must never do so again.'

‘But,’ questioned the child, ‘is it wicked to be poor, nurse?’

‘No, my child,’ was the answer, ‘some people can’t help being poor—I am poor, but it is not my fault.’

‘Then why should Florence call James a beggar?’ said Estelle, ‘he don’t go round with ragged clothes and a dirty face, and a basket on his arm—he is no more a beggar than I am.’

‘Florence was very wrong,’ replied the nurse, ‘but that was no reason why you should give way to your passion—hereafter, love, when anything of the kind happens you must come to me, and I will tell you what to do.’

‘I will try to,’ replied the child, and the nurse, after preparing her for school, dismissed her with a kiss, and she was shortly afterwards seen hand in hand with James Ely walking through the lane which led to the little school-house.

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## CHAPTER IV.

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EVERARD EMORY was a man who was always awake for the prosecution of a ‘fair business transaction.’ If he could get the advantage of a brother-merchant or a retail dealer from the country, no matter by what species of meanness or chicanery he succeeded in obtaining that end, it was with him ‘a fair business transaction.’ Taking advantage of the necessities of his fellow-men, under any and all circumstances, he considered nothing less than a ‘fair business transaction.’ Foreclosing a bond and mortgage when he had solemnly promised he would give his creditor time to take it up, was a ‘fair business transaction’—letting out houses splendidly furnished at an exorbitant rent to ladies of easy virtue, was a ‘fair business transaction’—turning a family into the street for non-payment of rent, even though the father of that family might

be lying on a sick bed or the mother in the pangs of maternity, was a 'fair business transaction'—in short anything by which he might add to his enormous wealth, so long as it did not bring him within the grasp of the law, was a fair business transaction.

As an illustration of Mr. Emory's method of doing business sometimes, let us look into one of the tumble-down tenements in Cannon street, of which he is the owner. The house, which is of brick, and three stories high, is a very old one, and when built was intended for one family, but now there are six families in it. A group of ragged, dirty-faced children of both sexes are upon the door-steps, and although most of them are sickly-looking and emaciated, the effect of exposure and want, yet do they possess some degree of activity and are full of noisy mirth. Hardship and hunger have not entirely succeeded in 'crushing out' all the exuberant spirit, the buoyant feeling, which belongs to glorious childhood, and though some of them are sad and drooping, most of them look careless, if not contented. Let us proceed up the rickety staircase, and opening the first door that comes to hand, let us enter, and we are in the home of Thos. Gardner, a shoemaker. The room is very small and almost destitute of furniture, but what few pieces there are, are disposed about the room to the best advantage. There is but one strip of carpet, but the floor is white and clean, as are also the windows and the walls, although some few panes of glass are out, and are replaced by stiff paper neatly pasted in. A sick man is stretched upon the only bed in the room, while a woman sits up near him, busily plying her needle upon a pair of shoe-uppers. An infant six months old, whose pale, little face, gives it almost a ghost-like appearance, is lying asleep on a worn-out quilt upon the floor, and is watched over by a little girl some five years of age. The sick man is very much wasted by disease and does not look as though he would long be a burthen upon his wife, who nods even while she sews, and is fit to drop from weakness, the result of

hunger and over-watching. It was from no fault of Thomas Gardner that his family is thus destitute. He was a sober, industrious man, and before misfortune fell upon him with a heavy hand he had managed to get along comfortably enough. But the fire-fiend came and wrested from him what little property he possessed. The house in which he lived was burned to the ground, and he and his wife and little ones barely escaped with their lives. After that he hired the wretched apartments in which he then lived, but he fell sick from a cold which he contracted at the time of the fire, and when he had worked till he fell from his bench in a state of exhaustion, his wife prevailed upon him to go to bed, where he had lain ever since, attended to and supported by her uncomplainingly.

‘Rachel, dear,’ murmurs the sick man, turning his languid eyes upon his wife, ‘do go to sleep for a little while—it worries me to see you strive so hard to keep awake—you are killing yourself.’

‘Hush, dear,’ is the gentle reproof, as the wife lays her long, slender fingers upon her bloodless lip, ‘the doctor says you must keep quiet. Kitty O’Donnell, who lives in the next room, promised me she would come in presently to watch by you, and then I’ll sleep.’

A silence of five minutes, broken only by the sighs of the heart-seared wife and the hard-fetched breath of the sick man ensues, when the latter again speaks, though seemingly more to himself than to his wife—

‘Mr. Emory has been told what a state I’m in, and I don’t think he would be so cruel as to turn us into the street. But if he should—God help us—if *he should!*’

‘Don’t, Thomas, pray don’t talk so,’ urges the wife, in a low tone, ‘you don’t know how it troubles me.’

‘Well, I won’t, dear,’ is the response, and silence again ensues.

And now the wife’s chin drops upon her breast, and though she is evidently asleep, her fingers move mechanically to and

fro. The husband is not asleep. He lies with his large glassy eyes wide open, and looks first at his wife, and then at the sleeping babe and its guardian sister. The latter sees his gaze fixed upon her, and God bless the child, she murmurs softly as though fearful of waking her mother—

‘Go to sleep, Papa, I ain’t hungry a bit—I can go a good while longer without eating yet.’

A stifled groan bursts from the lips of the agonized invalid, and then the door opens abruptly, and a gruff, surly-looking man blocks its entrance.

‘Now, then,’ he cries, and at the first sound of his voice the sleeping wife bounds from her chair as though the knell of death had been rung in her ear, ‘is that money ready?’

Not yet—not quite yet, Mr. Cantwell,’ cries Rachael Gardener, in a despairing tone. ‘I only asked for a week—only one week—surely Mr. Emory will grant me that.’

‘Surely Mr. Emory will do no such thing,’ is the harsh reply—‘it ain’t the way he does business—he’s waited three days already, and now if the money ain’t ready you must bundle out—that’s my orders, and there’s no use talking about it, for I can’t help it.’

The sick man raises himself by a great effort upon one elbow, and his lips move as if in the attempt to speak. The attempt is vain—a few unintelligible mutterings escape his mouth—the glare of dissolution is in his eyes, the death-rattle sounds in his throat and he falls back upon his pillow a corpse.

‘He’s dead!’ shrieks the now-frantic woman as she throws herself upon the body, ‘he’s dead, and you have killed him! May the widow’s curse pursue his murderers!’

Do you start, reader, and look incredulous? Nay, this is but one case. Wives are made widows and children left fatherless and homeless in this great city, almost every day, by some ‘fair business transaction.’

And notwithstanding all this, Everard Emory was pronounced immaculate by ‘mouths of wisest censure.’ He was a professed

follower of the meek and lowly One—no one prayed louder in prayer-meeting, and no one contributed more largely to the support of the gospel than he did—no one was more polished in his manners, more grave and solemn in his deportment, more affable and soft spoken in his intercourse with those *who did not know him*, but who thought they knew him best. In the world of fashion—not extreme fashion, but respectable, serious, religious fashion—Everard Emory was a Christian, for there he was not known, but in the world of poverty, and toil and suffering, he was a devil, for there he was known.

After stating so much concerning this pattern man, the reader will not be surprised to learn that when Everard Emory found out that Mr. Grant had a considerable sum of money, and that he wished to invest the same in some profitable business, he (Emory) should feel anxious to put him in the way to do so, by roping him into a ‘fair business transaction.’ Thus it was, then: Everard Emory owned a share in a St. Louis mercantile concern which he had started in company with two others, and which, contrary to his expectations, turned out anything but profitable. Consequently, he was anxious to sell out to advantage, and he found a good customer in Mr. Grant. His partners in business were to some extent in his power. He was in the possession of certain facts concerning them which they would not like to have had made public. In fact, this was a favorite game of Emory’s. He was a shrewd calculator, and seldom had business relations with a man unless he gained a hold upon him in some way, before they parted. Not unfrequently he would actually persuade a man into a dishonest course of action, but in such cases he always operated so shrewdly that not the slightest proof against himself could be adduced.

When Mr. Grant, therefore, broached the subject of business to him, he first satisfied himself that his customer was sound, and then he at once offered him a share in the concern in which he was a partner, *on the most advantageous terms.* As

he represented it, the house was in a most flourishing condition, and could not fail to make a speedy fortune for all concerned in it, and by a string of other equally great falsehoods he succeeded in selling *his share* in the concern to the dupe, thus effecting a decidedly fair business transaction, after which he instantly wrote to St. Louis, advising his partners of the course he had taken, and hinting significantly in a postscript that it was not necessary Mr. Grant should know that Everard Emory no longer constituted one of the firm. Mr. Grant was consequently entirely ignorant of the game which had been played upon him, and as year after year passed by, and things instead of mending grew daily worse, he, of course, thought that Emory was an equal sufferer with himself, and if he did blame him at all, it was for what he considered his lack of judgment in engaging in so doubtful a speculation, and not because he had the slightest doubt of his honesty.

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## CHAPTER V.

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A PERIOD of sixteen years had passed away after Mr. Grant first located himself in St. Louis, and though care had graven deep channels in his face, and the hand of time had slightly bent his back and silvered his hair, he was the same proud, arrogant, unyielding man as ever. Often did his necessities push him to the greatest extremes, still he managed to keep up appearances, and the struggles which he was frequently forced to undergo were hidden even from his children. Among other creditors, he had drawn largely upon Emory, who, of course, professed the greatest friendship for him, and never refused a loan *when he could accomodate him*—but occasionally even he was short (at least he said so, and who would presume

to doubt the word of so estimable a man,) and then Mr. Grant was forced to apply elsewhere.

Estelle had grown to be a charming girl, but her foster-mother, with all her careful training, had not succeeded entirely in eradicating those traits of character which had so plainly marked her infancy. She was yet quick-tempered and sometimes wilful where she was not held by affection, but to the old nurse she was still the same dutiful and tractable child as ever. Her little playmate, James Ely, had changed from the school boy into a fine, noble-looking youth of nineteen, and was as much like Estelle in disposition as possible—fiery and impetuous under wrong—stubborn under coercion, but warm-hearted and easily won over by gentle persuasion and words of affection. They had changed towards each other in nothing, with the exception that love had taken the place of friendship, and, although James was not allowed to visit the house, and Mr. Grant had in the sternest terms, forbidden Estelle, on pain of his displeasure, to see or speak to him, yet they met often, despite the vigilance of the household, and exchanged sentiments of undying affection and enduring constancy. James, like Estelle, was motherless, his maternal parent having died when he was about two years of age. His father had been a captain in the merchant's service, but a severe chronic rheumatism attacked him shortly after the death of his wife, which incapacitated him from following his vocation, and he was obliged to take up his residence permanently on shore. Like most persons engaged in such service, Capt. Ely was a rather improvident man, and consequently could not boast of his possessions, although he had saved sufficient money, if properly expended, to give his son a fair education, and to provide for his own wants during the few years, which, in the regular course of nature, were left to him.

Neither Fanny nor Florence Grant were troubled with many suitors after Estelle began to show signs of womanhood. The fact is, that although considered rich, their society had

never been much courted by the more fastidious fashionable flatterers of the male sex, even when they were young and most attractive. This may be accounted for partly from the fact that they were so full of self-love and vanity that they never saw a man whom they considered an equal, and partly from the fact that they were naturally cold and distant, and took no pains to conceal their disagreeable qualities.

At first, this conduct on the part of his daughters gave Mr. Grant no concern, for his unsociable nature rather revolted at than desired new ties of relationship, and he imagined that he should always be beyond the reach of want; but as old age began to creep over him, and he saw nothing but bankruptcy in the future, he regretted that he had not earlier counselled them to act a different part. Fanny had now reached the age of thirty, and, though still youthful-looking, she was extremely cross-grained and uncompanionable—almost cynical, in fact. Of her, Mr. Grant had no hope. Florence was only two years younger than Fanny, and, although partaking largely of the latter's disposition, she was more artful, and when her father, after many struggles with his pride, laid before her the whole state of his affairs, and set forth in strong terms the probability of poverty in the future, her vanity took the alarm, and she determined, late as it was for her to think about it, to secure a husband if possible.

Estelle was scarcely more than a child as yet, and the idea of her marrying never entered her father's head—still, he could not help noticing that the young gentlemen visitors at his house paid her many marked attentions, and this fact induced the reflection that although she was not a woman yet, she would soon be one. This reflection was followed by the recollection of the decided preference which Estelle had shown for the youth, James Fly, now clerk in a mercantile establishment at a salary of about six hundred a year. He well knew his child's obstinate, wilful disposition—he was satisfied that she was neither to be awed by threats or controlled by force,

even when exercised by himself, and this troubled him exceedingly. He was not fearful of any immediate step on the part of the young people—in fact, he was half-inclined to believe that his child's preference was a mere girlish fancy which would in time die out of itself—but then she was a singularly imaginative child, and *might* cling to her early recollections—she *might* resolve upon keeping up her acquaintance with the penniless clerk—she *might* at some future day even marry him in spite of everything. Mr. Grant was not actually fearful of this result, but as I have said, he thought that such a thing *might* be, and the remotest possibility of such a contingency was frightful to him. He would rather, much rather have seen her a corpse before him than the wife of James Ely. On this account he charged his two elder daughters to watch her closely; and knowing that Mrs. Dunscomb possessed unbounded influence over her, he begged that lady to argue his child out of what he termed “her wicked, babyish whim.”

Among the few single gentlemen who visited at Mr. Grant's residence was a Mr. Cornelius Hollowell. He had gained the *entree* to the house on a letter of recommendation from Mr. Emory, who represented him as being a gentleman speculator of some wealth, who was called in the direction of St. Louis on business which it would take him some time to complete. This was partly true and partly false—though to do Emory justice, he believed it to be all true. The fact is, Mr. Hollowell was about as sharp a man as Mr. Emory himself, and he had succeeded, by some means, in making the latter individual believe he was quite wealthy, when his riches at most were confined to a few hundreds. He was as Emory had represented him to be, a speculator, but not one of that class who confine their attentions solely to real-estate and railroad and steamboat stocks. His speculations embraced a wide range, comprising everything that was likely to prove at all profitable, whether stocks, real estate, faro-banks, tailor's bills, moustache growing or matrimony. He was an adventurer, and no sooner

had he entered Mr. Grant's abode, than he commenced a series of *speculations* as to whether "the old boy" had what he facetiously termed "the collateral," and if so, whether the same would prove comeatable through Florence. It was hard to satisfy himself concerning the first of these *speculations*, for Emory had furnished him with no information concerning the state of Mr. Grant's affairs by which he might be guided, and he found upon enquiry that everybody else was as ignorant on the subject as he was himself. From the fact, however, that the young lady treated him with extreme *hauteur*, notwithstanding his reputation for wealth and his brilliant appearance (for he did make a brilliant appearance, as the world goes) he naturally arrived at the conclusion, after much reflection, that where there was such an abundance of pride and independence there must be considerable money, which latter commodity he determined to secure, if flattery, impudence and knavery could accomplish that result.

Accordingly, he was not less surprised than gratified when, after a long course of the most apathetic indifference, assuming occasionally the shape of actual repulses, on the part of Florence, she began to treat him more kindly, and to even manifest pleasure in his society. Fanny, too, grew less distant, and the old gentleman treated him with all the cordiality which such a nature as his could assume. Hollowell hugged the darling assurance to his heart that he had at last made an impression—that the at first inappreciative girl had at length recognized his "fine points"—and he was happy.

While this interesting matrimonial game was in progress, Estelle and young Ely were not idle in playing their parts as real lovers; but their pleasing drama was suddenly stopped for a season, by the appearance, in one of the favorite scenes, of an unwelcome character. Fanny Grant had suddenly surprised them in one of their stolen interviews, and, of course, lost no time in making her father acquainted with the fact. A domestic storm, in which Estelle, imperious, bold and resolute,

battled with the elements, was the consequence. The old man fairly trembled with excitement, and swore, in his great rage, that he would shoot her lover and her both if they persisted in running counter to his will. Fanny thought that, if she did not care for her family, she should have more respect for herself than to forfeit her standing in society by seeking the companionship of such a clown; Florence could not imagine what she saw to admire in the low-bred fellow; and Mr. Hollowell (who was now an acknowledged suitor, and thought he was justified in venturing a remark) said the fellow deserved a horse-whipping for presuming to force himself into decent society.

At this remark, from a person whom Estelle regarded as a stranger, and whom she had never liked from his first appearance in the house, the young girl's large black eyes flashed with indignation, and her face was crimson with resentment as she replied, in a quiet but earnest manner—

‘Doubtless, you are sincere, sir, in what you say, and, as a good member of society, I consider it your duty to inflict the chastisement which, in your opinion, should be meted out. You will have no difficulty in finding the *fellow*, who, *perhaps*, will take his punishment kindly; but if he should not, and you should chance to be the whipped instead of the whipper, you may console yourself with the reflection that you at least *attempted* to do your duty. Pray, do try it, sir!’

And, unable longer to restrain her tears, she rushed from the room, and, proceeding to her foster-mother's apartment, threw herself upon the old lady's neck, and gave way to a passionate outburst of mingled rage and grief.

‘Never mind, darling,’ said Mrs. Dunscomb, soothingly, after Estelle had, in sentences broken by sobs, related what had transpired. ‘Hope for the best—it will all come right at last. You did wrong, to be sure, to meet the young man, after your father had commanded you to relinquish his company, but they needn't have rated you so severely. Hereafter,

my child, you must try to forget James Ely, since your father is so bitterly set against him, for your duty to your parent should be paramount to every other feeling.'

'Nurse,' determinedly replied Estelle, who had now become quite calm, 'I have obeyed my father in everything but this, not because I loved or feared him, but because you taught me that it was my duty to do so, but do not be displeased with me if I declare that as far as James Ely is concerned I shall never even try to forget him. What has he ever done that he should be stigmatized as low-bred or clownish? Is he not gentlemanly, honest and respectably connected? Can one bring a single charge against him save that he is poor, and that he has dared to love me, his equal in poverty, if what my father says be true? I tell you, nurse,' she continued, resolutely, and in a loud tone, 'that in this determination, be it right or wrong, I will remain steadfast, even though death itself should be the consequence of my obstinacy, for that is what you will doubtless term it.'

At this moment her father (who had followed her after she left the room, and who had heard all that passed between her and her foster-mother) entered the apartment.

CHAPTER VI.

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MR. GRANT'S face was livid with rage—his thin lips twitched nervously, and his passionate, snake-like eyes sparkled with fury as he turned them upon his self-willed daughter.

‘So, so,’ he exclaimed, ironically, ‘you have obeyed me only because your nurse has taught you that it was your duty to do so, eh? And you are determined now to set at naught even her teachings? Since such is the case, I am inclined to think that your nurse’s method of impressing her lessons has lacked force, and it is necessary that I should take the matter in hand myself. A little wholesome restraint, if I may be allowed an opinion, is necessary to bring you to your senses, and henceforth you are to be under the especial charge of your sister Fanny, who shall never, even for a moment, lose sight of you; and should this fail to bring you under proper subjection, I will try the efficacy of bolts and bars. Mrs. Dunscomb,’ he continued, turning to that old lady, who, with a troubled expression of countenance, stood silently gazing on the scene, ‘you will oblige me if you will keep aloof from my daughter till further orders.’

The good old woman’s eyes filled with tears, at this abrupt termination of the stern old man’s speech, for the idea of being separated from her pet had never entered her mind. For sixteen long, long years Estelle had never been absent from her even for a day. With a solicitude equal to that of an own mother, she had watched over her in infancy, taught her to lisp the first words her little ‘stammering tongue’ had ever uttered, guided her tiny, tottering feet in the first essay at

stepping, watched her growth from day to day, soothed her childish troubles, quieted her fears, and made her character a study till she was acquainted with all the phases of her singular disposition. Nor could Estelle bear the thought of being transferred from the care of her foster-mother to that of her tyrannical sister. It was a contingency she had never thought of, and it came upon her with startling effect. Of all threats that could have been made this was to her the most fearful—of all punishment that could be inflicted the most dreadful—a fact of which her father was well aware, and he acted upon it.

‘Let me beg of you, sir,’ said Mrs. Dunscomb, with much emotion, ‘to reconsider the determination at which you have just arrived. Estelle is quick-tempered and thoughtless in speech, and did not mean all she said. She will obey you in future, if you leave her with me—I *know* she will,’ and as she ceased she turned an imploring look, full of meaning, upon her wilful pet.

Estelle interpreted the look at once. She knew her kind old nurse desired that she should retract what she had said, and promise to be a more obedient child in future, and she wished to do so on more accounts than one. In the few short moments intervening between her parent’s expressed determination and her nurse’s appeal to her, she had turned over in her mind all the disagreeable treatment to which she would be subjected if her father’s threat was carried out—the sarcasm and tyranny of her sour-tempered custodian—the taunting remarks of Florence, and the insulting observations of Hollowell. From these painful speculations her mind reverted to the agony of mind which her old nurse, whom she loved dearly, would suffer in her absence. She knew the old lady would pine and weep for her lost pet. She saw the tears coursing down the furrowed cheeks, even while her appalling gaze was fixed upon her. Then again her thoughts turned upon herself. To whom should she fly in her

time of trouble and unrest? Into whose ear could she pour her complaint? Upon whose bosom could she weep away her sorrows, if taken from her darling foster-mother? It was a severe struggle between fear for herself and defiance of her father—love for her nurse and determined self-will. The latter, however, proved to be the master-passion, for she at length said, in a proud and defiant tone, looking the while steadily at her father, who was apparently waiting for her decision—

‘In all things proper, my father has the right to command me, and I will obey him, but I deny him authority over my affections, which are God-given, and which I could not, if I would, alter. He may by force control my actions, but he cannot prevent my natural aspirations, and I should be acting the part of a hypocrite should I promise that which I know it would be impossible for me to perform.’

‘It is about such a reply as I anticipated,’ said Mr. Grant with forced calmness, ‘and I don’t know that I should have altered my course of action had it been more humble. All that remains for me to do now, is to place you at once under the care of your future guardian and preceptress, to whom I shall give my instructions concerning you in your presence.’

And taking her unresisting hand, he led her to the room of his eldest daughter.

For a week was Estelle a prisoner in her father’s house—nay, worse than that. She would gladly have exchanged places with one confined in a penal institution, for then she might have been left to herself, but as it was, her keeper was always with her. True, she was allowed the range of the house and garden, but never alone—close by her side was ever to be found her dictatorial and splenetic sister, and not unfrequently both her sisters—who, with a refinement of cruelty, of which few of the softer sex happily are capable, played upon her high-toned nature to such a degree as to render her occasionally almost demoniacal. To add to her grief, she frequently met her foster-mother around the house, but was not

allowed the privilege of speaking to her. At such times it took all the nerve the poor child possessed to prevent her from weeping bitterly, but she would not have gratified her sisters by shedding a tear for the wide world. She often felt, however, as though she would be willing to die for the privilege of throwing herself once more upon that old lady's bosom, and weeping till she had not one more tear left to shed.

This systematic cruelty could of course have no other effect than that of developing in a ten-fold degree all Estelle's most objectionable qualities. It rendered her more self-willed and obdurate than ever, and led her to cordially hate and despise those for whom she should have cherished the most kindly feelings.

Mrs. Dunscomb knew that this would be the effect of such arbitrary and unjust measures, and she lost no opportunity of setting forth the fact in strong terms to Mr. Grant, with whom she argued that the part he was playing was no less unjust towards her than it was dangerous to both the health and disposition of his daughter—that even admitting he was right in taking such measures to punish Estelle, he had no right to punish her, (Mrs. D.) who had always most faithfully looked after his household and anticipated his wishes. She represented to him that so far from softening and making more pliant the obstinate nature of his child, he was only rendering her angular temper more uneven, and awakening in her bosom passions which no after-repentance on his part could eradicate, and which would tend to utterly ruin her.

Mr. Grant saw the force of this argument, but it would nevertheless have been unavailing to move his stern heart, had it not been backed by some suggestions on the part of Fanny, who was beginning to grow tired of her charge, (pleasant as it was at first to command Estelle and spite Mrs. Dunscombe at the same time,) and wished to accomplish by stratagem what she knew could never be effected by coercion. She therefore argued with her father that it was his duty as a parent to

alienate Estelle's affections from James Ely, by any means within his power. She candidly admitted that she did not believe force would ever effect anything. 'We might,' she said, 'continue to keep them apart; but this requires a constant vigilance which is too troublesome, especially when, by a little stratagem, we may place an effectual barrier between them. The child is neither to be driven or coaxed by us—her heart is full of pent-up wrath which we may smother, but which we cannot prevent from breaking forth with uncontrollable fury the moment an opportunity offers. Besides, we cannot always guard her, and I am satisfied that if a chance for escape should at any time occur, she would, without any hesitation, fly to her lover, and once in the presence of a minister, all the trouble we have taken with her would be lost. A little deception in such a case would, I think, be perfectly justifiable.'

'And what do you propose to do?' asked her father, whose worst fears were awakened by the probability of the elopement and marriage hinted at by the wily Fanny.

'In the first place,' was the reply, 'pretend that you have witnessed satisfactory signs of amendment in Estelle, and permit her once more to receive the caresses and attentions of Mrs. Dunscomb. Change your manner towards her by degrees, and after a few days, admit to the nurse that you have misjudged your child's character, and taken the wrong means to exact obedience from her—that you are still opposed to the match, but feeling confident that Estelle's happiness is at stake, you are willing to permit the visits of James Ely to the house, and if, after a proper time has expired, she still holds to her preference, you will place no obstacle in the way of their union. This will throw both her and her baby lover entirely off their guard, and give us a chance to operate.'

'But what is next to be done?' questioned the old man, upon whose countenance there rested a mingled expression of disgust, fear and impatience.

‘Why, then,’ answered Fanny, ‘we must awaken jealousy—not only in her but in him—they are both quick-tempered and easily worked upon—once arouse that passion within them and mutual hate will take the place of that silly passion which they suppose to be love.’

‘I do not at all like the part which you are disposed to assign me in this disagreeable drama,’ remarked the old man, ‘and moreover I am afraid I should play it but indifferently, for it is not at all in my line.’

‘Better to rehearse this part well, than to be obliged hereafter to play the principal character in a real life drama which for want of a better name we may entitle Poor Relations,’ replied Fanny.

This last master-stroke of Fanny’s, settled the matter, and the proud old man who had never before dreamed of employing either persuasion or trickery to enforce compliance with his commands, promised to go by her direction.

Accordingly, after the unsuspecting Estelle had passed, as I have before remarked, a week of most intolerable suffering under the dominion of her sister, she suddenly found herself free from bondage, and once more enjoying the society of her foster-mother. This was a great blessing to her, but it was nothing in comparison with the joy she felt when informed by the old lady that her father had relented, and had expressed his willingness that James Ely should visit the house. How gratifying, not only to her love, but to her wounded pride, was the intelligence! What a triumph over her tantalizing sisters, and her insulting brother-in-law in prospective! How proud of James she would show herself in their presence, just for the satisfaction which such a display would give her! How loftily she would carry her head while resting upon his arm, as though she were a queen, her lover a prince, and all the household besides (excepting of course her nurse and father) her subjects! Poor girl! how little did she dream of the duplicity that was being practiced upon her—a duplicity

in which even her father had a share! Yet how happy she was in her blissful ignorance! Happy as only a fresh young heart, full of love, and hope, and happy anticipations, can be. She could only account for the sudden change in her father's demeanor towards her in one way. She attributed it to the influence and motherly eloquence of her old nurse, and she determined if it was ever in her power, she would show the kind old lady how full she was of gratitude. To say the truth, Mrs. Dunscomb (who was of course as ignorant of the true state of affairs as Estelle herself) was inclined also to think that her frequent conversations with Mr. Grant had not been without their effect upon him.

To say that James Ely was equally surprised and overjoyed when he received a note from Estelle informing him that every obstacle to their free companionship had been removed, would but poorly express that youth's feelings. He could scarcely at first divest himself of the idea that he was dreaming, and after he had read the note over and over again a dozen times, he took it to his father (his confidant in everything) in order to fully satisfy himself that he was wide awake.

'See, father,' he said, rushing into the old gentleman's presence, with the precious billet open in his hand; 'see what Estelle has written! read—read!' and as he spoke his large, lustrous black eyes sparkled with joy, and his fine, manly countenance was full of pleasurable excitement.

The old captain was seated in his easy chair when the youth entered, and with his feet resting upon an ottoman, was dreamily indulging in pleasant thoughts of the past. The life of a sea-faring man is necessarily an eventful one, and Capt. Ely had doubtless, in his long connection with maritime affairs, endured many hardships, witnessed many scenes which he would fain have forgotten, and perhaps have committed some faults for which he was heartily sorry, but a review of his long and useful life left him very little to regret, and much to render him happy and contented. He was decidedly intellectual, and

when young was an active, spirited, and fearless man, though prodigally generous, and full of the 'milk of human kindness.' He was a thorough seaman on ship-board, and a gentleman in the drawing-room. He was not the sea-captain too often pictured in novels and represented upon the stage—that disgusting caricature, whose meaningless froth and fury is intended for honest indignation—whose obscene remarks and ribald oaths take the place of true humor and plain language, and whose hard-to-be-understood sea phrases are meant to convey the impression that the utterer could have but one idea in his head, and that idea, a ship. No, Captain Ely was a good-hearted, intelligent, plain-spoken man, proud of his position in life, independent in feeling, and very fond of his son.

'What is it, Jemmy, my boy?' he asked, as the youth held the note towards him.

'O, such news!' was the exultant reply, 'but read it—read it for yourself!'

The old seaman adjusted his spectacles, and after reading the note carefully, he handed it back with the remark—

'Very pretty, Jemmy—very pretty indeed—and since you are so deeply interested in the matter, I'm glad the stiff old gentleman whom you are anxious to call father-in-law, has condescended to unbend a little. I must say, however, it would have pleased me better if you could have made up your mind to forget the young lady.'

'Why so, father?' exclaimed the youth, complainingly, 'I don't see why you should dislike Estelle. Ah, you don't know her, or you wouldn't say so.'

'I don't dislike Estelle, my son,' replied the old man quietly, 'on the contrary, from what I have seen of her from the window I am inclined to think her a very nice sort of young lady—a little too fiery, perhaps, though that is a fault which age and experience will remedy, in all probability—but if she was the most virtuous and lovely girl that ever lived I should still wish that you could forget her.'

‘May I ask why?’ enquired James, with some anxiety.

‘Well, in the first place,’ answered the old man, ‘you are both too young to think of marrying yet. It don’t make so much odds about the age of the girl, but I don’t think a man should marry till he’s thirty at least. What do you know of the world? Nothing. A young fellow at your age is apt to fall in love with a score of pretty faces on the same night; and you don’t know how soon you may meet with a damsel whose beauty will eclipse that of Estelle, even in your estimation.’

‘O, no,’ sighed the youth, ‘*that* is impossible.’

‘In the next place,’ continued the old gentleman, without noticing the interruption, ‘you are poor, and the girl has been reared in the lap of luxury—she can scarcely be supposed to have a mind of her own yet, and there’s no telling what effect an offer of marriage from a rich man—particularly if he were accomplished and good-looking—would have upon her. It would be harder to give her up after you have been for a length of time in the unrestricted enjoyment of her society than it would now.’

‘O, I am *sure* of her love,’ said James Ely, confidently.

Then, again,’ continued the old Captain, ‘I don’t much like the idea of forming any connexion with a man who considers himself above me. I feel that I am as good a man as Edward Grant the merchant—equal in birth, in intelligence, in integrity of character—in everything except, perhaps, wealth, and that is no standard by which to judge a man. I am also satisfied that in all the above regards, save the last one, you are a fitting match for his daughter, but for all that, I know the merchant holds a different opinion, and that makes the difference.’

‘Excuse me, father, but you misjudge the man,’ said young Ely, earnestly, ‘he may have held a different opinion, but he does not now—else why has he authorized Estelle to write this note?’

‘I cannot tell,’ was the captain’s reply, ‘it may be all right,

my boy, but I cannot help thinking it somewhat singular that he should so suddenly alter his opinion. A man who has carried certain ideas of caste throughout a long life seldom changes them at the last hour. However, my boy, if you feel that your happiness lies in that direction, and that direction only, follow the bent of your inclination, and you have my earnest wishes for your complete success.'

'Thank you, father,' said the youth, and folding up the note he put it away and was soon afterwards at the side of the fair girl who had penned it.

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## CHAPTER VII

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ABOUT six weeks after the events just detailed took place, Everard Emory and Cornelius Hollowell, the *speculator*, sat in a well-furnished apartment in the country residence of the former, in the town of ———, on the Hudson. They were seated before a magnificent centre-table, upon which stood two bottles containing wine, one of them nearly empty, and a couple of wine-glasses. The face of Emory was somewhat flushed, but that of Hollowell wore its usually pale and nervous aspect.

'So you think her beautiful, eh?' questioned Emory, as he poured out a glass of wine and proceeded to sip it.

Beautiful! echoed Hollowell, 'you may say that—you would say it if you saw her, I know—beautiful as a houri, and proud as an Empress—won't allow an ordinary-looking individual, like myself, to come within gun-shot of her. Shade of Venus, what an exquisite form she has! Such a neck and bust! eyes, and hair, and such a complexion! O, you should see her!'

‘And this young fool—this Ely,’ said Emory, ‘he actually supposes the old gentleman intends to let him marry her?’

‘Supposes!’ answered Hollowell, ‘of course he does—he feels sure of it—he imagines that his marriage is to take place shortly after mine, which comes off almost immediately after my return. The ball-room plot to separate them, a full account of which I have given you, must be successful, but woe unto those who take a part in it, if it is ever afterwards discovered! That young Ely is a perfect fire-eater—he and Estelle are both alike in that respect—either of them would die, if necessary, to be revenged.’

‘Did I understand you to say the boy was poor?’ asked Emory.

‘Yes,’ was the reply, ‘poor as Job’s turkey—receives a miserable pittance of six hundred a-year—but I suppose he thinks the old boy will make that all right after the knot is tied. By the way, Emory, between you and me, what’s the old fellow worth?’

‘Why, I can’t say, exactly,’ replied Emory, ‘but I suppose he must be worth something handsome by this time—say two hundred thousand dollars or so,’ and as he uttered the abominable lie, the hypocrite washed his throat out with a swallow of wine.

‘Two hundred thousand,’ repeated Hollowell, scarcely able to conceal his gratification, ‘well, that is something handsome.’

‘Yes,’ said Emory, (and if his companion had been watching for it he might have observed a malicious sneer playing about his mouth as he spoke) ‘you will be a fortunate man if you marry in such a family.’

‘O, as to that,’ replied Hollowell, carelessly, ‘it matters but little to me about the money; of course I had rather the old gentleman should be rich than otherwise, but I don’t expect to finger any of his cash. I am comfortable enough without that.’

‘O, of course, of course,’ replied Emory; ‘as you say, it is gratifying to know that those with whom we come into rela-

tionship are wealthy, even if we are beyond the reach of want ourselves.'

'By the way, Emory,' suddenly said Hollowell, 'talking of money, reminds me that I am rather short just at present, and want to raise a thousand. I have a promissory note for that amount at ninety days on a responsible person in St. Louis, with whom, as well as the endorsers, you are doubtless acquainted. What'll you do it for?'

And as he finished speaking, he passed the note to Emory, who, after examining it carefully, said—

'Well, seeing that it's you, I suppose I can accommodate you for about a hundred and fifty.'

'Almost too much, Emory, by George!' exclaimed Hollowell; 'however, I want the money, so let's have it, and say no more about it.'

Emory placed the note in his wallet, filled up a check for the amount less the discount, and passed it to Hollowell, who trembled somewhat as he received it, though this was not perceived by Emory.

'When do you propose returning to St. Louis?' questioned Emory, after a short pause.

'Well, in the course of about three weeks, I suppose,' was the reply. 'I have considerable business to settle up here before I go, and it will depend somewhat on my industry.' Then, affecting a yawn, he pulled out his watch, and remarking that it was nearly twelve o'clock, he took his departure, and made his way to the hotel at which he was stopping.

As soon as the door had closed upon him, a half-maudlin chuckle came up from the depths of Emory's bosom, and he muttered—

'I do love to bleed these fools! ha! ha! ha! The idea of his attempting to gull me into the story that he didn't care for the old man's money. Wonder if he thought I had lived in this world with my eyes open till this time for nothing. I don't know that I'd have laid it on quite so thick as two hundred thou-

sand, if I had not been provoked at his unpardonable misconception of my character. Two hundred thousand—ha, ha, ha! Why, old Grant must be some thousands worse off than nothing! But I'm secure—I hold the documents which would enable me to wind him up at a week's notice. Hollowell calculates upon marrying a fortune! I hope he may! Perhaps he will find one in the many charms of the adorable Florence—but the two hundred thousand! O, that is too much!' and again he indulged in that half-drunken, heartless chuckle.

Had Everard Emory been aware of all the fact connected with the interview which had just terminated between Cornelius Hollowell and himself, he would not, perhaps, have felt quite so merry. Had he known that the speculator had palmed off upon him a forged note, and received good money therefor, he would have come to the conclusion that the two hundred thousand dollar story had cost him something; but he did not know it, and consequently he was in an excellent humor with himself. After yawning heavily once or twice, he swallowed another glass of wine, and rising from his chair, he half staggered to the door, but just as he was about turning the knob, a footstep upon the lawn outside caught his ear, and listening attentively, he muttered, as he heard the sound of a key in the night-latch—

'There's Cantwell—I didn't expect him up before to-morrow night—I wonder if anything has gone wrong,' and retracing his steps he seated himself just as the individual he had alluded to as Cantwell knocked at the door. 'Come in,' he growled, and the next moment the person who, some years before, had caused the death of poor Thomas Gardener, the shoemaker, in the hovel in Cannon street, by the abrupt announcement that he must produce the money for the rent or 'bundle out,' stood before him. He was a man about thirty five years of age—of medium height and rather stout—his lack lustre eyes were of a dingy gray color—his hair sparse, and of a mixed gray and auburn—his face was pale, but its hue was

not the result of illness or a delicate constitution—it was of that unnatural, death-like, *clayey* paleness which springs from deep thought and constant excitement, and its whiteness was rendered more apparent by the entire absence of anything like a beard—his nose was prominent, his cheek-bones high, his mouth large, and when he spoke he displayed two rows of very large teeth of dazzling whiteness—he was dressed in an entire suit of black, and his neck was encircled by a white choker with an ample bow in front, giving him a decidedly clerical appearance.

‘Well, George,’ said Emory, in a tone of evident uneasiness, after the individual just described had dropped himself quietly into the chair, which, a short time previously, had been vacated by Hollowell, ‘what has brought you up so soon? Has anything of moment transpired?’

Before the interrogatory was answered, the person to whom it was put took out his handkerchief leisurely and wiped the perspiration from his brow—he then unbuttoned his wristbands, turned them over his coat-cuffs, and deliberately reaching the wine swallowed two glasses of it, one after the other—then carefully wiping his mouth, and drawing a long breath, he answered in a whining tone, and with a slow, measured enunciation, as though he weighed the importance of each word before giving it utterance—

Well, no—nothing to speak of—that is to say, nothing serious.’

‘I will add twenty-five per cent. to your salary,’ said Emory, ‘if you will drop that expression, ‘nothing serious.’ You bring it in upon every occasion, and I never can take your true meaning from it, for I verily believe that if half my possessions were swept away, and it were left for you to give the intelligence, you would pronounce it ‘nothing serious’ before you gave me the particulars. Now, then, what has happened? Has that *new arrival* escaped from her vigilant friend and tutor?’

‘No,’ was the answer, ‘she has not escaped, but certain parties know where she is, and although of course no part in the transaction can be traced to you, even if she is found, you had better secure her at once if you want her. Otherwise it will cost you something serious to keep her.’

A silence of some five minutes ensued, during which Emory seemed buried in intense thought, and Cantwell helped himself to another glass of wine. At length the former said:

‘I guess, George, the old woman had better let her go—I don’t want her.’

‘What!’ exclaimed Cantwell, with a countenance indicative of the greatest surprise—‘lose such a chance as that?—you don’t mean it, surely!’

‘Yes,’ replied Emory, ‘I do—the fact is, I am growing somewhat tired of this kind of business—there is too much trouble about it—besides it’s rather dangerous—twice, already, vague rumors which have awakened considerable suspicion have found their way into the church, and although money freely expended has had a potent effect in stilling the tongues of tattlers, I may not always be so successful.’

‘I suppose, also,’ said Cantwell, with a malicious chuckle, ‘that there are certain reminiscences connected with the family of the *new arrival*, as you term her, which are far from pleasant?’

‘Beast!’ growled Emory, fixed his eyes full upon the face of his visitor, ‘how dare you make allusion to that affair? Are you not as culpable—nay more culpable than I am?’

‘Well you need not get in such a passion about it,’ said Cantwell—‘perhaps I was wrong to touch upon that point, and I’ll not do so again.’

See that you do not!’ snarled the dark-browed man, and then after a few moments’ reflection, he continued, in a more friendly tone, ‘The fact is, George, I have chalked out an entirely new course—one which I know will surprise you. I am going to get married!’

When the last sentence left the lips of Emory, Cantwell was conveying a wine-glass to his mouth, but he held it suspended between his thumb and finger half way in its progress, and with his eyes fixed upon his employer, he stared at him as though he thought him crazy. At length his astonishment exhausted itself in a long whistle, and setting the wine back upon the table untasted, he exclaimed—

‘Is it possible! well, that is something serious! May I ask how long it is since you arrived at this determination?’

‘About half an hour since,’ was the reply.

‘And who is the happy woman?’ enquired Cantwell—‘you haven’t been soft enough to pay any attention to the tears of that bright-eyed little brunette, have you!’

‘Tush! no!’ replied Emory impatiently, ‘the wife I have in view is a person whom you have never seen. I have not seen her myself in some time, but I have heard a good report of her to-night, and I intend to marry her.’

‘Have you consulted the lady in the matter?’ interrogated Cantwell.

‘O, no,’ was the cool reply, ‘if I had to wait for her consent, I fear the affair would not come off, but fortunately her wishes in the matter are of not the slightest importance. She must be Mrs. Emory whether she likes it or not, or I have mistaken the character of her father.’

‘Ho! ho!’ giggled Cantwell, ‘something serious the matter in that direction, eh? You’ve got the old gentleman this way, have you?’ and he turned an imaginary screw, accompanying the action with a gesticulation of pain. ‘Where is the future Mrs. E. at the present time?’ he added, when his pantomime had ceased.

‘She’s in St. Louis,’ was the reply, ‘but I will have her on here shortly. In the mean time I shall make this my home permanently, and leave my entire business in the city in your hands. I can do so with perfect safety I know,’ he continued significantly, at the same time fixing his keen black eye upon

the countenance of Cantwell with an expression which caused that individual to cower beneath it, 'for should I discover that you have been remiss in your duty, there would indeed be *something serious* the matter.'

'I understand,' said Cantwell, cringingly, 'all right—your affairs will be as safe in my hands as though they were in your own—and now, as I feel somewhat sleepy, you will excuse me if I say good night,' and lighting a lamp he took his way to the room set apart for him. When he had reached his apartment he threw himself into a chair and sat for some time gazing on vacancy. He was evidently in deep thought, and at length, as a demoniacal smile played upon his hypocritical face, he muttered to himself—'Everard Emory's a smart man—a shrewd man—I might say a particularly sharp man—but I'll fool him yet! He has got me now, 'tis true—an accessory before the fact in a murder case is something serious, there's no denying that—but the accessory, if goaded too far, may actually commit murder to free himself from a dangerous witness. You don't think of that, Mr. Everard Emory, do you? No, no—you don't think that George Cantwell has nerve enough to use subtle poison a second time—but he has, though—he has—and he'll do it in self-defence, if you push him too far,' and pulling off his coat, he threw himself upon the bed, and was soon in an uneasy slumber.

Shortly after Cantwell had laid himself down, Emory also, proceeded to his chamber, and he likewise indulged in some reflections before retiring, though the thoughts to which he gave utterance were very different from those expressed by his apprehensive yet desperate employee. 'I must wind the old man up,' he muttered, as he stretched himself out—'I must have his daughter—the description Hollowell gave of her has set me on fire, and I must have her, let it cost what it will. Proud, is she? and passionate, too? Well, so much the better—that's what I want—I like opposition, especially in

a woman. It will be such pastime to humble her pride ! such recreation to curb her temper ! Besides, I will be doing her a kindness—pride and passion are execrable qualities in a young lady, and that man is a true Christian who strives to eradicate them. O, I'll make an angel of her, if such a thing is possible ! I wonder if that scoundrel, Cantwell, dare attempt to play any tricks upon me ? Psha ! no—I have too fast a hold upon him—still I must be wary—I must throw away no chances—I know him to be both cunning and treacherous, and but that I have him safely in my power I should be fearful of him,' and while muttering such sentences as these, drowsiness gradually crept over the dark-souled man, and in a little while he slept the uneasy sleep of the wicked.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

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ABOUT three weeks previous to the interview between Emory and Cantwell before related, the inhabitants of a pleasant country village in the State of Connecticut—at least the more piously inclined portion of the inhabitants—were enraptured by the appearance among them, at a camp-meeting, of a very eloquent divine (the Rev. Ebenezer Waffles) accompanied by his mother, an elderly and seemingly a very devout lady. Everybody was talking of the powerful discourses delivered by the minister—who came highly recommended from New York—the number of conversions he was daily making, and the Christian meekness and humble piety of his unpretending mother. Almost every family in the place had invited them to make a call, and great jealousy existed among the villagers as to whose house should be next honored by the presence of

the distinguished strangers. Among all the residences at which they stopped, however, none seemed to please them so well as that of the widow Wallace—a truly pious woman who was very poor, but who had seen better days. She had been twice married, her first husband having been a merchant who died abroad, leaving but little property behind him, and her second a sea captain who died at sea leaving her almost destitute. By this last marriage she had an only daughter now about sixteen years of age. The reader has already been introduced to a near relation of this excellent woman under very melancholy circumstances, as will presently appear.

Mrs. Waffles and her amiable son could not have been actuated by any mercenary motives in giving the preference to Mrs. Wallace's humble abode over that of any of her more well to do neighbors, for she possessed very little of this world's goods, although her heart was full of Christian charity, and she was always willing to share her last crust with the needy wayfarer. Her daughter Helen, too, was like her. Naturally sweet-tempered and dutiful, the example and tuition of her excellent mother had rendered her unspotted heart a temple full of the 'beauty of holiness,' and she was as lovely in person as in spirit. Somewhat tall and slender in stature, she was light-footed as a fawn—the rose and lily mingled in her complexion—her luxuriant hair was of a sunny golden color, her eyes large, lustrous and heavenly blue, and her glad soul, so free from guile and from every worldly taint, lit up her features with a radiant smile, exhibiting to all who gazed upon her an evidence of that Christian peace 'which passeth understanding.'

'And have you no male relations whatever?' enquired the Rev. Mr. Waffles of the widow, one morning, after having put forth an eloquent prayer for the widow and the fatherless, 'no one upon whom you could call for assistance in the event of persecution from the hardened and the vile?'

'No, sir,' answered the widow, 'I have but one male relative—a boy nephew in New York, my sister's child.'

‘And what is your sister’s name?’ enquired the reverend gentleman, with much evident concern.

‘Rachel Gardener, sir,’ was the reply.

‘You don’t mean Rachel Gardener who lived some years ago, in Cannon street, New York, and who was so shamefully turned out of house and home while her husband was dying?’ said Mr. Waffles, enquiringly.

‘The same, sir,’ was the reply.

‘Poor thing,’ said Waffles, ‘I knew her very well, but I could only help her at the time with my prayers, for I had impoverished myself in working for the missionary cause. I waited upon Mr. Emory, however, and talked to him about it, but all to no purpose; he wouldn’t listen to me. Hard man, that Emory—very hard man—I am inclined to think that something serious will happen to him one day or other.’

‘New York is a dreadful place!’ said Mrs. Waffles, groaning deeply, ‘but at the same time there are some advantages there for a young person which cannot be found here. You know, Mrs. Wallace,’ she continued, ‘I was talking to you yesterday about your allowing your daughter to enter my Seminary for young ladies. I shouldn’t expect one cent in the way of remuneration, if you would consent to part with her. I don’t know why I am so taken with her, but really I should esteem the privilege of making her a classical scholar, and thus placing her beyond the reach of want, quite a favor.’

‘Yes,’ chimed in Mr. Waffles, ‘I also feel deeply interested in the young lady’s welfare, and I pledge you my word that nothing serious shall happen to her if you let her go.’

‘I don’t know how I could very well part with her,’ said Mrs. Wallace, the tears starting to her eyes at the thought of it, ‘she has never been away from me a day since she was born, and to separate from her now would be very hard.’

‘Yes,’ argued Mrs. Waffles, ‘but the separation need not be a very long one—she can visit you every week as she stays with me, for that matter. And only consider of what you are

depriving her, if you refuse to let her go! Not only of what you are depriving her, but yourself, for by the time her education is finished she will be able to earn a living for you both.'

'I suppose it does seem very selfish in me,' said the poor widow, 'and I feel that I ought to let her go. What do you say to the proposition, Helen?' she continued, turning to her daughter, who had thus far taken no part in the conversation.

'I should hate to leave you, mother,' replied the young girl, even for a week—but then, I dare say, the advice of Mr. Waffles and Mrs. Waffles is good—I would be willing to suffer a good deal, for the sake of being able at last to make you comfortable and happy. After all, a week isn't such a *very* long time. Besides, I shall have a chance to visit Aunt Rachael when I get to New York, and while with her I will try to imagine I am with you.'

'Spoken like a brave child!' said Mr. Waffles, encouragingly—'so you shall visit your Aunt—I'll take you to her house myself, in a carriage—so let's consider the matter settled. What say you, Mrs. Wallace? We leave on the day after to-morrow; is it a bargain?'

'I cannot say no,' answered the widow, after some hesitation, and turning away to hide the tears which filled her eyes, she continued, 'she may go with you, but remember that in her you hold my life. Should any serious accident happen to her it would break my heart.'

Of course both Mr. Waffles and his mother said that the possibility of harm coming to her while she was under their protection, was not to be thought of, and of course the mother, who had every faith in their integrity, believed them, so she wrote at once to her sister, apprising her of the step which her daughter was about to take, and after two days of dreary anticipation the dreaded time of parting arrived, and with many tears she placed all that she held dear on earth under the protection of her pious friends. As well might the pet lamb have been placed under the protection of the wolf, for

the Rev. Ebenezer Waffles and his reputed mother were the creatures of Everard Emory's will, and the connection existing between them will in time appear.

Helen wept bitterly after she got on board the boat which was to bear her, for the first time in her life, a distance from home. Her young heart was full of hope, however, and under the well-assumed words of endearment and soothing remarks of the two fiends who had her in charge, she soon rallied, and by the time the steamer had reached her dock in New York, some hours afterwards, she felt more resigned, and tried very hard to appear lively. She had scarcely time to give vent to an exclamation of surprise at the busy scene which met her eyes upon the wharf, and in the densely crowded streets, when a carriage, to the driver of which the Rev. Mr. Waffles had beckoned, drove up, the door was opened, the party seated, and the vehicle rolling rapidly over the cobble-stone pavement. It was about dark when the carriage drove up to a genteel-looking building, the door of which was opened almost before the driver had jumped off his box, and the party admitted by a short, stout, black woman. Helen was taken at once to a magnificently-furnished apartment, by Mrs. Waffles, who told her that as she was doubtless tired, she might go to bed at once, and in the morning she would introduce her to her class-mates. All at once it occurred to the poor child that she had not seen her trunk put upon the carriage, and she made a remark to that effect.

'Oh, never mind your trunk to-night, my child,' said the hag, 'that will be looked after to-morrow. I don't think you will find use for any dresses you may have brought with you. I am afraid they are not quite fashionable enough for the city. In that wardrobe you will find everything that you desire, and now, good night.' She impressed a hypocritical kiss upon the pure cheek of Helen—her breath was like a poisonous exhalation upon a spotless rose—and turned to leave the room—suddenly she paused, however, and added, 'We are not in the

habit of rising very early in the morning, and you will have to amuse yourself till the bell rings the best way you can. You will find books upon various subjects on the table, and if you wish to write, you will find everything necessary for that purpose in the drawer.'

In another moment Helen was alone. No, not entirely alone, for her guardian angel was near her, whispering hope and consolation to her heart, and, kneeling by the bedside, she poured forth her whole soul in earnest prayer to Him who 'tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.' She prayed first for her mother, then for the kind benefactors who had voluntarily taken her under their patronage—then for all her friends (and enemies, if she had any,) and finally for herself—that she might always live a pure and holy life, and be diligent in her studies, and have resolution to carry out the wishes of those who had so befriended her. Poor girl! she little knew *how* they had befriended her, but even if the veil had been suddenly lifted from her eyes, she would still have prayed for them—would have prayed that they might be brought to realize the extent of their terrible wickedness.

She was not long in getting to sleep, for health and innocence are great opiates, but she did not slumber as soundly in that large and splendidly furnished apartment as she had slumbered in her little bed-room at home. The pure air, and the scent of the honeysuckle clambering around the lattice, and the chirp of the cricket breaking the solemn stillness of night, and many other little things peculiar to the country, were wanting, and her rest was consequently somewhat uneasy.

She might have slept some six or eight hours, when suddenly she was awakened by the cry of 'Murder!' proceeding from a female in the street. Such sounds at the dead hour of the night are very common in the city, especially in the locality where poor Helen then was, but they are seldom heard in the quiet country, and the poor girl sprang from her bed terribly frightened, and rushing to the window, looked out. It was a

beautiful moonlight night, and everything in the street could be seen as distinctly as at noonday. As she gazed forth, again that terrible cry rang in her ears, and caused the blood to curdle in her veins. The next moment a man came rushing from an alley-way opposite, and fled rapidly up the street—then came the sound of the watchman's club, and the heavy tramp of many feet in the direction of the cry—and then a number of people, one after the other, rushed rapidly past in the direction which the man who emerged from the alley-way had taken. Presently the shuffling of feet, and the murmur of confused voices, as though a crowd had assembled at the corner above, fell upon her ear, and then a terrible scuffle apparently took place, and then she heard those who had but just ran past, returning. Loud oaths and imprecations, which caused the pure-minded girl to close her ears up, fell from many lips, as the party drew near, and when they had arrived opposite, she noticed that two officers had a man in custody, whose clothes were very much torn, and whose face, as she caught a glimpse of it in the moonlight, was full of blood. They stopped in front of the alley-way from out of which the cry of murder had proceeded, and shortly afterwards a woman was brought out, and Helen observed that her clothes also had been torn nearly off her back, and that her face was bruised and bloody. The whole party then again moved on, and when the noise of their retiring footsteps had died away in the distance, the silent watcher at the window found herself trembling violently in every joint. While the scene so unusual to her was being enacted, her excitement had sustained her, but after the cause of her excitement had ceased, she found the cold sweat standing in large drops upon her brow, and her heart beating fearfully.

It was some time before she could make up her mind to lay down again, and she wished heartily that it was daylight, but at length she summoned up all her philosophy, and inwardly breathing a short petition, she was about to go to bed again

when she was suddenly startled, by shouts of boisterous mirth below stairs, in which she thought she could distinguish the voices of the Rev. Mr. Waffles and his pious mother.

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## CHAPTER IX.

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HELEN knew not what to make of this unlooked-for noise. Up to this time not a suspicion of the true character of her new-found friends had entered her mind, for guileless herself she never looked for deceit in others, especially when they wore the garb of Christianity. The scene which she had just witnessed opposite had only disturbed her serenity of mind—not awakened her doubts—but when she heard this ‘sound of revelry by night,’ participated in by two persons whom she had been led to suppose would frown down the slightest semblance of levity, she became really alarmed. A thousand distracting thoughts crowded into her brain at once. She remembered having read in the newspapers while at home accounts of the arts practiced by designing persons in the city upon friendless girls, and although she could not bring herself to believe that she had fallen into a snare, still she felt very uncomfortable, and wished—O, how ardently!—that she was safely at the side of her mother, in her little cottage home.

She made a strong effort, however, to check her thick-coming fancies, and was about to seek forgetfulness in slumber once more, when again the frightful noise which had at first alarmed her grated harshly upon her ears, banishing every thought of sleep, and bringing her once more to her feet upon the floor.

For a moment or two, in her perturbation, she walked distractedly up and down the apartment, and at length seated

herself near the window from which she had but a short time previously looked out upon the street, and burying her face in her hands, she endeavored to call forth from the depths of her troubled imaginings, some plan of escape from the terrible abode into which she was now certain she had been entrapped.

‘Persons who are bad enough and bold enough,’ she thought, ‘to take such means as they have taken to inveigle me here, will stop at nothing to accomplish their full designs, and if I cannot escape from them, what will become of me? I shall be forced to associate with the vicious and the degraded—to witness scenes at which my soul will revolt—to listen to language which will be like deadly poison in my ears—to be surrounded day and night by all that is impure and heart-corroding—perhaps to grow familiar with and indifferent to it!—O, no, no, no!—not that—not that! forgive me, Heaven, for the wicked thought! But how can I escape? Should I even succeed in gaining the street, where shall I go at the dead hour of night? I do not know how to find my aunt’s house, and if I did, could I walk unmolested through the city? But perhaps I am too fast—these people may not be so wicked—so *very* wicked—as I am led to think them—perhaps the peculiar circumstances by which I am surrounded, have led me to put too serious a construction upon the matter—at least I will be satisfied that my suspicions are well founded. Courage, Helen, courage! Put your trust in the Father of the Friendless, and all may yet be well!’ and approaching the door of her apartment, she cautiously opened it, and listened attentively.

The shouts of merriment had ceased, and save the suppressed murmur of voices in the room below, not a sound was to be heard. The hall lamp was still burning brilliantly, and softly stepping on tip-toe to the head of the stairs, she began step by step to descend. She could feel her temples throb and hear the beating of her own heart as she reached the bottom of the staircase, and approached the door of the drawing-room, at the

keyhole of which she applied her eye, and looked in upon the party whose orgies had disturbed her.

The sight which met her gaze, and the few sentences which she was enabled to catch convinced her that her first fears had not been premature. There were some four or five persons in the room, though the scope of Helen's vision could take in but three. These were the Rev. Mr. Waffles, Mrs. Waffles, and a dissipated-looking young man about twenty years of age, who sat opposite the two first-mentioned parties, with a glass of wine in his hand which he occasionally sipped leisurely, as though already surfeited. The countenance of this youth was not unprepossessing, and but for an air of recklessness, and a certain *animal* expression about the mouth, joined with the extravagant style in which he was dressed, one might have wondered a little at finding him in such company. Both Mr. and Mrs. Waffles had evidently been indulging rather freely in the exhilarating beverage which stood upon the table near which they were sitting, and the former showed unmistakeable signs of inebriation.

'I'd like to see her,' were the first words which Helen heard after she had taken her position at the door. They were uttered by the young man above mentioned, 'I'd like to see her,' he said, 'if she's so beautiful—but of course your saying so is no proof of the fact—you'd call her handsome if she was as homely as a stone-fence.'

'What odds does it make to you, Bob,' hiccoughed the Rev. Mr. Waffles, 'whether she's good-looking or ill-looking? She's not for you, anyhow!'

'Well, suppose she isn't for me,' was the reply, 'I don't s'pose looking at her would hurt her, would it?'

'I don't know whether it would hurt her or not,' broke in Mrs. Waffles, 'but I know it wouldn't be very agreeable to the feelings of a certain gentleman if he knew we had exhibited her to anybody, and so I tell you once for all you can't be introduced to her till we hear from the gentleman aforesaid. If

he don't feel inclined to cultivate her acquaintance, you can—if he does, you can't—that's all about it.'

'It strikes me,' said the youth, assuming a grave expression of countenance, 'that you are over particular about this new boarder, and your anxiety to keep her out of the way leads me to suppose that everything isn't on the square! I hope you haven't been inveigling another innocent girl into the house. If I thought such was the case, curse me if I wouldn't withdraw my patronage from you forever. I'm bad enough, but I never could descend to any such business as that.'

'You're always imagining something, Bob,' said Mrs. Waffles, in a slightly alarmed, but conciliatory tone—'what do you suppose I would want to run any such risk for, when I can make more money by doing a legitimate business? The whole long and short of the matter is, we are going to 'sell' an old fool who has plenty of money.'

'Well, then, if I can't see her,' said the youth, apparently satisfied with the hag's explanation, 'I may as well be going—so good night!' and as he spoke he picked up his hat and arose to depart.

It was now time for Helen to leave the dangerous position which she had for some moments occupied, and springing lightly to the stairs, she fled swiftly, but noiselessly up, and succeeded unobserved, in reaching the room which had been set apart for her, just as the street-door closed upon Bob. The character of the parties by whom Helen was surrounded, was now clearly apparent to her, but, instead of sinking under her trials she seemed to gather resolution and strength as her case grew more desperate. The hours which intervened till morning seemed ages to her, but the daylight came at last, and with it came hope to the watch-weary and grief-laden girl. She had made up her mind to betray no uneasiness while in the presence of the diabolical old hag whose prisoner she had become, but to seize the first opportunity that offered to escape. Accordingly when, at 10 o'clock she was called down

to breakfast, she assumed a cheerfulness which she was far from feeling, and went through the ceremony of introduction to her *class-mates* with as good a grace as possible, although in her soul she loathed them, and an involuntary shudder crept over her as she suffered them, one after another, to embrace her.

The Rev. Mr. Waffles, whom the reader by this time must have discovered to be no less a personage than the detestable wretch, George Cantwell, met her at the breakfast-table with an hypocritical greeting. He still kept up the holy character which he had assumed, for it was the intention of himself, and of the horrible wretches with whom he was leagued, to corrupt the mind of the victim by degrees, if possible, deeming it the safest and easiest way of gaining the entire control of her. Accordingly, after *family prayer*, in which all joined (although there was but one earnest pleader among them, and she did pour out her whole soul in a petition for escape,) the blasphemous Cantwell said grace, and breakfast was then partaken of by all save Helen, who pleaded a slight headache as an excuse for abstinence. After the meal was over, Cantwell gave Helen a deal of excellent advice, in the course of which he urged her above all things to obey Mrs. Waffles in the minutest particular, assuring her that if she did so, she could not, by any possibility of means, go wrong. He then took his departure, and that night he was on his way to Emory's residence on the Hudson. He had notified his employer the day before, by letter, of his success in entrapping Helen, and what passed between the two when they met is already known to the reader.

Helen watched throughout the live-long day for a chance to escape, but in vain. The old woman was untiring in her vigilance, and did not leave her a moment alone till night came, and then she allowed her, as on the night previous, to retire to her room. This time, however, the poor girl did not go to bed. She had firmly resolved, that whether failure or success

attended her, she would make the attempt to escape that night. She did make the attempt, and she succeeded. It occurred to her that, if she could reach the basement entry unperceived, she might meet with a favorable opportunity of slipping out, for she had noticed, among other sounds, while listening, that the basement door was frequently opened and shut by the servants passing back and forth. Accordingly, she took off the dress which the old woman had insisted upon her wearing, and, putting on her own, she watched her opportunity, and at about ten o'clock, when everything, save the whispered conversation of the guests in the parlor, seemed still about the house, she slipped noiselessly out of her room, and scarcely drawing her breath, she fled with the swiftness of a spirit of air down the stairs, through the hall to the basement staircase, down the basement stairs, through the entry below, and was just about feeling for the latch, when she heard a footfall descending the stone steps outside. Drawing back, she crouched in the corner behind the sidelights, and as the door opened, and the stout black woman, who had attended at the street door on the evening of her arrival, passed in, she slipped out adroitly, and the next moment she found herself in the street, and at liberty. She fled rapidly along, she knew not whither, but at the moment it was immaterial to her—all she wished was to get as far as possible from the hateful scene of her late harassing trials. She turned every corner she came to, but had not progressed far when she was suddenly brought to a stand-still by a policeman, who seizing her rudely by the arm, exclaimed—

‘Yer needn’t try to dodge me in that way—I’ve had orders to take in every one o’ yer that I meet, and I’m a goin’ to do it, so come along!’

‘O, don’t take me to prison, pray don’t!’ exclaimed the affrighted girl, who up to this moment thought of no other danger than that of being retaken by Mrs. Waffles—‘I have not committed any crime, indeed I have not!’

‘O, yer can’t fool me by tryin’ to play off green—come

along—it'll only be a month or two on the Island, and it'll do yer good—come along!' and in spite of her tears and entreaties he was leading her along towards the Station House, followed by a troop of ragged boys and idle men, when on turning a corner another policeman joined him.

'Hello, Ben!' asked the new comer, 'who have you got there?'

'O, one of the gals, Jack,' was the reply, 'and I'm a goin' to take her in.'

'Stop a minute, Ben,' said he who had been addressed as Jack, 'I'm thinking you've made a little mistake this time—that gal don't look like a bad one, and I'll bet she ain't either'—then addressing Helen, he continued, 'what's yer name, Sis, and where do you live?'

The unfortunate girl explained to him in utterances broken by sobs, and in as few words as possible, that she had been inveigled from her home in the country—had made her escape from her persecutors and wished to find her Aunt's residence.

'And what street does your Aunt live in, you poor little thing?' questioned the policeman in a tone of compassion.

'I have heard my mother say,' answered Helen, in a tone of despair, 'but I have forgotten.'

'O, humbug!' exclaimed the man who had first arrested her, 'that won't go down.'

'One moment, Ben,' said the better-natured policeman, in a deprecating tone, 'one moment—I've got sisters myself, I have, and I shouldn't like to hear of one of 'em bein' ill-treated—and I don't want to see a good gal unjustly suspicioned'—then turning to Helen again, he continued, 'what's your Aunt's name, young woman?'

'Mrs. Gardener,' replied Helen.'

'Mrs. Gardener, eh?' said the policeman, pricking up his ears, 'and what's her Christian name?'

'Rachel,' answered Helen.

‘Has she got any children?’ enquired the policeman, evidently excited.

‘Yes, two,’ answered Helen, who by this time had dried her tears, and began to feel quite at ease, ‘she has a son and a daughter—Thomas and Mary Gardener.’

‘Good enough!’ cried the policeman, exultingly, ‘then you are my little Molly’s cousin! Well, what strange things do happen! I expected to see you soon, for Molly told me you was coming, but I didn’t dream of meetin’ you at such a time and under such circumstances as these! Come along—but not to the Station House!’ and as the policeman who had arrested her made no opposition after hearing his friend Jack’s explanation, the latter led her away, and in half-an-hour afterwards she was sobbing and laughing together in the arms of her Aunt, and trying to answer the thousand questions put to her by her two cousins at the same time.

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## CHAPTER X.

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WE must now return to our St. Louis friends. Hollowell had got back from New York, and in view of his approaching nuptials with Florence was making as extensive a show as possible with the thousand dollars which he had succeeded in obtaining by means of the forged note from Everard Emory. He was a close calculator, and knew exactly how long a certain amount of money would enable him to keep up a certain style. He had demonstrated to his own perfect satisfaction, by an arithmetical test, that he would be obliged to spend his last dollar upon the night of his wedding, beyond which event

he did not look for anything like pecuniary embarrassment, for he had no doubt that a father-in-law in possession of two hundred thousand dollars would be only too happy to part with a portion of it to the husband of his daughter. In fact, Hollowell had determined in his own mind that he would at first, just for the appearance of the thing, reject the liberal offer which he knew Mr. Grant would make him. He had led the old man to suppose that he was in very comfortable circumstances himself, and did not expect anything with his wife, so that the subject of a settlement had never been hinted at; and while Hollowell was cherishing the idea that his marriage with Florence would enable him to gratify his money-spending propensities without transgressing any law save that of domestic economy, the old gentleman was felicitating himself with the thought that the wealth of his son-in-law might, perhaps, assist in restoring his fallen fortunes—this was likewise the hope uppermost in Florence's mind, for it is almost needless to say that she had not a particle of love for the man whom she had promised to marry. Estelle and James Ely had been completely deceived by the specious conduct of all around them, and they did not dream while they were enjoying each other's society without restraint, that the wily Fanny had prepared a blast which, when ignited, must destroy their happiness forever.

Thus matters stood when a grand private and select entertainment was given by Mr. Charles Tieman, a retired merchant of St. Louis. The affair had been in course of preparation some time, and the Grants, as well as James Ely and Cornelius Hollowell had been among the first guests invited. It was to be the 'last affair of the season,' and it was expected that it would be the most showy. For a whole year a like opportunity would not offer itself to the gay and fashionable friends of the wealthy merchant, for the display of fine dresses, finer speeches, and still finer airs, and they were consequently determined to show to the very best advantage.

‘That white crape will look lovely, Estelle,’ cried Fanny Grant, as the three sisters were engaged in selecting suitable dresses for the forthcoming *soiree*.

‘Do you think so?’ said Estelle, who, under her altered circumstances had almost forgotten her sister’s former cruel treatment, ‘do you think so, Fanny?—why you used to say that blue silk was more becoming.’

‘I used to think so,’ replied Fanny, ‘but I do not now. You cannot select anything in which you look so charming as in a white crape, festooned with roses. Is not that your opinion, Florence?’

‘Decidedly,’ answered Florence.

‘Well, I won’t set my judgment against that of two who should know better than myself,’ said Estelle, gaily, ‘and the white crape it shall be. I hope James will like it, and I don’t care who else it suits.’

‘You shall make the finest appearance of any young lady in the room,’ said Fanny, ‘if my taste is good for anything—and I think it is—for I intend to take especial pains with you. It is my desire that your natural good looks should be enhanced in a ten-fold degree, if possible.’

‘You are very kind,’ said Estelle, gratefully.

‘Don’t mention it,’ returned Fanny, ‘I shall be doing no more than my duty, and shall consider myself fully repaid if your appearance excites the attention which I think it will.’

For once in her life Fanny Grant was sincere in what she said. She did wish Estelle to look beautiful. Not because she loved her any better than formerly, but she had her object in it.

Ten o’clock came, and a portion of the *elite* of St. Louis had assembled at the splendid mansion of Mr. Charles Tieman to take part in the festivities of the occasion, but amid all that blaze and splendor there were few hearts that had ever felt a thrill of pure, unselfish joy. The desire to see and be seen, to criticise, to gossip, and to whisper scandal, was uppermost,

and the discovery of a foible in a neighbor was much more satisfactory to the majority than the finding out of a virtue.

Fanny Grant, in her earnest endeavors to render Estelle beautiful had succeeded to a miracle. James Ely thought she had never looked so charming, and he almost worshipped as he gazed upon her. Her surpassing loveliness was the prevalent remark, and there was but one other lady present whose general appearance could be said to at all approach Estelle's. This was Miss Julia Durand, daughter of one of Mr. Grant's partners, who, singularly enough, was dressed very similar to Estelle herself, though her form was not so commanding, and her eyes lacked the vivacity that sparkled in the dark orbs of Miss Grant.

But a short time had passed by in the ball room when suddenly Fanny Grant discovered that Estelle was looking very ill.

'Heavens!' she exclaimed, addressing James Ely, who was about leading the fair girl upon the floor to take part in a quadrille, 'the poor child is about to faint! Don't you feel unwell, dear?

'I do feel a little dizzy, and somewhat pressed for breath,' answered Estelle, 'and I think I won't dance this time.'

'By no means!' exclaimed James Ely, in a tone of anxiety, 'I would not have you attempt it for the world, if you do not feel like it!'

'Come with me, love,' said Fanny Grant, assuming a tone of tenderness, 'let us retire for a few moments from the glare of light and the heat of this room, which is really oppressive, and I dare say your illness will pass over speedily.'

'Yes, do go, Estelle,' urged James Ely, 'for my sake,' and thus importuned, Estelle walked away with her sister, and her lover resumed the seat which he had vacated.

Two or three sets in the cotillion remained to be filled, and scarcely had Fanny disappeared with Estelle in her charge when James saw Estelle's father walking towards him with Miss Durand hanging upon his arm.

'Ah, James, my boy,' he exclaimed with much apparent cordiality, 'you are disengaged I see—allow me to introduce to you Miss Durand—I was looking up a partner for her, and you are just the man.'

It would have been rude in the young man to refuse, so proffering his arm to the fair girl before him he led her upon the floor, and just as he did so, Fanny with Estelle, who had already recovered from her momentary illness, at her side, re-entered the room.

'Why, as I live,' exclaimed Fanny, 'James has found a partner already. He is about to dance with Julia Durand, the belle of St. Louis, as she is called. Well, there is no denying that she is rather pretty.'

Instantly Estelle felt the hot blood rushing into her face, and the first pang of jealousy which she had ever felt, shot through her heart. Suspicion is more keenly awake in matters of love than in anything else, and instantly it occurred to her that she had only the evening before made James acquainted with the fact that her father was almost bankrupt and she penniless—this, joined with the fact that he had urged her but a few moments before to retire, and had then instantly sought out one conspicuous for her wealth and beauty (for Julia Durand possessed a small fortune in her own right,) as a partner in the dance, was 'confirmation strong as proofs of holy writ' to her mind that a change had taken place in his feelings. She strove hard to conceal her sensations, however, and just at this time Hollowell, accompanied by Philip Tieman, son of the wealthy host, advanced towards them. Tiemann had often seen Estelle when she was a child, but some years had elapsed since he had visited her father's house, and she had grown almost out of his recollection. Advancing towards her he held out both hands and exclaimed—

'Can it be possible that this is my little favorite, Estelle? Why, it seems but a few short months since I was dancing her upon my knee! Egad, I have not reached thirty yet, but

I shall begin shortly to think that I am growing old'—then shaking both her hands warmly, he continued, 'if you are not engaged, may I ask the favor of your company for the next cotillion?'

'She will not refuse so slight a favor to an old friend, I am sure,' broke in Fanny, appealingly.

Estelle felt like anything else but dancing, and under any other circumstances she would have peremptorily declined, but her pride was touched, and she wished to let James Ely see that if he could secure a rich *belle* as a partner she was no less fortunate in being able to secure a wealthy *beau*. So she accepted his invitation, was led to the floor, and shortly afterwards the music struck up and the dance commenced.

The first figure of the cotillion had been scarcely gone through when James discovered the form of Estelle moving lightly around in the dance a few 'sets' from him. Instantly a disagreeable sensation of distrust and jealousy crept over him, and he stood transfixed with wonderment till reminded by a gentle touch upon the arm that he was detaining the dance. Rallying quickly he uttered a hasty apology, and assuming an air of gaiety which he was only able to counterfeit with the greatest difficulty, he managed to get through with the cotillion, after which he led Miss Durand to a seat by the side of her father, thanked her for her politeness, and sought a retired corner of the room where he might indulge in reflection.

'My father was right, after all,' he said to himself—'wealth does possess a charm even for Estelle—her illness was assumed to get rid of me so that she might choose a richer companion. Well, well, be it so—it will cost me a hard struggle, perhaps, but I *can* give her up—I *can* learn to despise the sordid soul that would barter the holiest feeling of which mankind is capable for gold—I *can* learn to rejoice, even, that the mask was lifted, and the hollow heart exposed, before it was too late—I *can* and I *will* do all this, but it will be a terrible trial!'

In the midst of these bitter reflections he was touched upon

the shoulder, and looking up he beheld Florence leaning upon Hollowell's arm.

'James,' said that young lady, 'Estelle has requested me to say to you that you must try and amuse yourself as well as you can for an hour or so, after which she will be at your service. She has fallen in with a very old friend whom she is anxious to entertain, and hopes you will excuse her.'

'Tell Miss Grant,' replied young Ely, pointedly, 'that she is very excusable, and that I have no doubt I shall be able to amuse myself very well for the remainder of the evening, without troubling her at all.'

Nay, nay, James,' said Florence, persuasively, 'you must not feel provoked at the poor child. It is true she did not exactly right in deserting you so unceremoniously for the society of another, but Mr. Tieman is a very old friend of the family, and she, in her thoughtlessness, imagined she was justified in doing as she did. I am sure she did not wish to offend you.'

'O, of course not,' answered James, sarcastically. 'I suppose she thought I would regard her feigning sickness as an excuse to git rid of me in the light of a capital joke. I am sorry I cannot so look upon it, however. On the contrary, it strikes me as a species of very low meanness, and so you can tell your sister if you please. Good evening, Miss Florence,' and rising from his seat, he sought out Miss Durand, with whom he was soon conversing as familiarly, and apparently with as light a heart as though nothing had happened to ruffle the usually happy current of his feelings.

Florence lost no time in making Estelle acquainted with the message which James Ely had, in his passion, sent to her, but she was very careful not to state what drew such a message forth, for it is almost needless to say that Estelle had not authorized her to address James in her behalf at all. The young girl's haughty and vindictive nature was fully aroused when what her lover had said, with many additions by Flo-

rence, was laid before her, and she declared she would never speak to him again. Both her sisters made many excuses for the youth, but they were excuses of such a nature as to strengthen, rather than weaken, Estelle's determination. Fanny averred that youth was ever variable, and that James would, after basking for a moment in the smiles of his new beauty, return to his first love, while Florence asserted that he seemed half inclined to offer an apology for his conduct when she left him, and was no doubt heartily sorry for what had occurred. These observations had the effect which it was intended they should have. Estelle was filled with passionate resentment, and in order to let James Ely see how little she heeded his love she sought the society of Mr. Tieman, with whom, for the rest of the evening, she danced and chatted delightedly, to all outward seeming, while a storm of grief and indignation was raging in her deceived and lacerated heart.

And so the night wore on, and when the company separated two hearts were blighted that had beat high with hope and joy when it assembled.

The next day when calm reflection had taken the place of the angry feelings which had filled the hearts of Estelle and James Ely the night before, they both began to think they had been too hasty. Estelle particularly began to imagine that there might be some mistake in the matter which a mutual explanation would clear up. Fanny, with a perfect knowledge of her sister's character, perceived this, and trembling lest the lovers should resolve to address each other by letter, and thus render null the pains which had been taken to separate them, determined upon a master-stroke of policy, which was nothing less than that James Ely should hear from Estelle's own lips that she did not love him and would not marry him under any circumstances. Accordingly having fixed upon the course she intended to pursue, she dispatched a short note to Ely, requesting him to call at the house at six o'clock that evening. She stated that she intended to have some talk with Estelle

concerning their unhappy differences—she could not bear the idea of their parting upon such slight grounds—it was a proceeding which they would both regret as long as they lived—and she concluded by stating that she had no doubt a reconciliation might be effected by a slight concession on both sides.

James Ely was overjoyed upon receiving this note, for he could not endure the thought of giving Estelle up forever, and he looked upon Fanny as the kindest of women. He wondered how she could have altered so much in so short a time, and was disposed to allow her the highest credit for warring against and eventually conquering those disagreeable traits of character which he had at first noticed in her.

Punctual to the hour, at six o'clock he rang the bell at Mr. Grant's residence, and was admitted to the parlor by the servant. Florence and Hollowell were both from home, and Fanny, he was informed, was walking in the garden with Estelle, and should be informed of his arrival.

Although late in the Spring, it was a warm, sultry evening, and James Ely, taking a book from the table, seated himself at an open window, and began looking over its pages with a view of passing the time till Fanny should make her appearance. Let us leave him reading and turn our attention to a conversation which at the time was going on at the back of the house between Estelle and her sister Fanny.

'Florence tells me she saw James Ely not two hours since,' remarked Fanny, 'and although she pressed him hard to call upon you and meet you half way in an attempt at reconciliation he utterly refused to listen to her, and said that if any apology was made it must come from you, and you alone.'

'From me!' exclaimed Estelle, indignantly, 'from me! when he was the first to give offence? Did he not urge me to retire from the ball-room, and then, as soon as my back was turned, seek other company? and was I not justified in retaliating? And now he looks to me for an apology! Should I stoop so low as to comply with his unjust demand I should be the

mean creature which he thinks me. No—much as a reconciliation would relieve my overburdened heart, I will never seek one at the expense of my self-respect. I will never humble myself before James Ely! Never! never! never! so help me Heaven!

‘I must admit,’ said Fanny, ‘that his wilful obstinacy has altered my feelings towards him in a great degree, and were I in your place I would let him see that a true woman’s affections are not to be trifled with. Why don’t you consent to receive the visits of Philip Tieman? That would bring your recreant lover to his senses if anything would.’

‘I cannot bring myself to play the trifler’s part in my cool senses,’ answered Estelle; ‘I detest trifling.’

‘Then why not receive his visits in good earnest?’ enquired Fanny, ‘and marry him to revenge yourself?’

The sisters were threading a little circular gravel walk that led completely around the house, as they carried on their conversation, and when Fanny put the last query to Estelle, which she did in an under tone, they stood directly beneath the open window at which James Ely was sitting.

‘Because,’ answered Estelle (and at the sound of her dearly cherished voice the heart of James Ely beat tumultuously as he inclined his ear forward to listen,) ‘because I do not love him.’

‘I am sure he loves you,’ said Fanny ‘and would marry you to-morrow if you would have him.’

‘Perhaps so,’ said Estelle, ‘but should he lay the world at my feet, backed by tears, and sighs, and protestations of eternal attachment, I would not marry him, for I do not love him.’

They passed on, and for a while James Ely sat like a statue, gazing fixedly on vacancy. The last hope to which he had clung was dissipated—the day-star of his existence had gone down in night—he had listened for the last time to the rich tones of that voice which to him had ever been the most de-

lightful music, and although it spoke his doom, there was a magic sweetness in it the recollection of which he would carry with him ever—ever—ever! He had not heard Fanny's last interrogatory to Estelle, but he had heard the answer which it drew forth, and it was to him like the sentence of death pronounced by an angel. Suddenly rousing himself from the spell that bound him, he seized his hat, and making his way out unobserved, he gained his own premises and went to his room. Pulling open a table-drawer, he took forth pen, ink, and paper, and hastily scratching a few lines, he folded the sheet, directed it to his father, left it upon the table, again rushed forth, and in two hours thereafter he was on his way to New Orleans as fast as steam could carry him. The despicable conspiracy against the peace of two youthful hearts was consummated at last—the lovers were parted—and the conspirators were happy, but only for a season. Villany is sure, sooner or later, to meet its reward, and the truth of the remark is fully borne out in what follows.

CHAPTER XI.

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THE fact that James Ely had suddenly left St. Louis was not known to the Grants for some days after his departure, and then they heard of it through one of the domestics, who in her turn, had learned it from Capt. Ely's old housekeeper, who imparted the information in a friendly confab through a crack in the fence dividing the two yards. There were but two persons who particularly regretted the young man's departure, and these were Estelle Grant and the old captain.—The former clung to the hope of reconciliation as long as she knew James was near her; but when he had departed, a settled melancholy took possession of her, and she seldom spoke, even to her old nurse, except in answer to a question. The old captain missed his son sadly, for he had been almost his only companion, and he had fondly hoped to have had him with him at his last hour.

Nor was it his loss alone that grieved him. He knew his son's wayward disposition, and he was fearful that when abroad, without a cool and experienced head to counsel him, he would abandon himself to despair, and dive recklessly into any pursuit which might offer. The letter which James had left was calculated to strengthen this apprehension. It was couched in language evincing the most hopeless despondency on the part of the writer. He gave, in as few words as pos-

sible, the details of his quarrel with Estelle, including the conversation which he had overheard between her and Fanny—stated that he would not have left his father under any other circumstances, but he could not bear the idea of being so near Estelle, with the thought that she no longer loved him ever uppermost in his mind, and concluded by stating that it was his intention to visit New Orleans first, where, if he could obtain a clerkship on board a vessel bound to foreign parts, he would ship, and endeavor in exile to forget his unhappy passion and the object of it.

The first perusal of the melancholy epistle gave the old seaman much pain, but he possessed a good share of philosophy, and, at length, came to the conclusion that grief was unavailing, and that his wisest plan was to bear his bereavement with the best grace possible, and trust to Providence for the safety and future return of his unhappy son. As far as Fanny, Florence, and old Mr. Grant were concerned, they were exceedingly rejoiced that the youth had concluded to relieve them of his presence, for with his disappearance vanished all danger of an *expose*. Fanny, indeed, had indulged a slight hope that, in his despair, young Ely would blow out his brains or take a dose of poison, but his sudden departure suited her about as well, for she had no fear that he would ever return, at least as long as Estelle remained in the neighborhood.

The day for the marriage of Cornelius Hollowell with Florence had long been fixed, and about one month subsequent to the gathering at Mr. Tieman's mansion the ceremony took place, with much display, at the house of the bride. Mr. Grant had impoverished himself to get the affair off with *eclat*. He had drawn largely upon his friends, for he had no doubt that, in a very short time, the liberality of his son-in-law, who seemed a most prodigal gentleman, would enable him to meet his liabilities. Hollowell, of course, was making the same calculations on his father-in-law's bounty—so be-

tween them it was a pretty even thing, though, if there was any difference, Hollowell had rather the best of it.

During the pressing calls for money which necessarily followed immediately upon the heels of the wedding, the actual state of things could not possibly long remain a secret. Mr. Grant needed money badly. He could scarcely turn a corner without meeting a creditor, and unpaid bills kept pouring in upon him thick and fast. He knew that he must call upon his son-in-law eventually—he had no other resource. The ice must be broken sooner or later, and, after mature reflection, he came to the conclusion that the sooner it was done the better. It was rather a delicate affair for himself to broach, however, and he prevailed upon Florence, at the earliest opportunity, to negotiate a loan on his behalf.

One evening about a week after Florence had become Mrs. Hollowell, she sat by the side of her husband in the drawing room, with one arm lovingly about his neck, while with the other hand she was playing with his luxuriant and well oiled and perfumed whiskers

‘How foolish our Estelle is,’ she said, after a brief pause in a conversation, the subject of which had of course been love, ‘to pine and fret so after that beggarly clerk, James Ely, who hadn’t a farthing to call his own, except what he was obliged to toil and drudge for.’

‘Very foolish—very foolish indeed,’ replied Hollowell, affectedly; ‘the fact of the fellow’s not having any money was not very objectionable if he had only been a gentleman—but he wasn’t; he was a poor, miserable wretch, the son of an old sea monster that hadn’t a genteel hair in his head.’

‘So horrid vulgar,’ said Florence, ‘it seemed to me as though I could smell tar every time he came near me, and I do believe he brought the scent from home with him.’

‘Very likely, my love, very likely,’ replied Hollowell, laughing; a girl of Estelle’s breeding should be held inexcus-

able for falling in love with any such fellow as that, unless he was immensely rich, and even then it would hardly pay.'

'I think there should be a law passed to prevent such *canaille* from marrying into respectable families under any circumstances,' said Florence, contemptuously, 'for I don't believe in marrying for money, and it is utterly impossible that *they* should know what love is—that is, refined love.'

'Such as brought us together for example,' suggested Hollowell.

'Exactly,' replied Florence; 'money is a very convenient thing, and it is impossible to live without it, but I do not consider it necessary that both the parties to a marriage should possess a fortune.'

'How well our ideas concerning this important matter agree,' said Hollowell, delightedly; 'you cannot imagine, sweet Florence, how your ingenuous sentiments please me;' then drawing her close to him, and looking in her face with an arch expression, he continued—'I'll let you into a secret, love!'

'Yes, dear,' was the reply of Florence, who felt sure that he was about to astonish her, by declaring the amount of his vast possessions. She calculated upon half a million, at least.

'It is such a good joke!' said Hollowell, apparently ready to explode with laughter.

'Yes, duck,' again repeated the expectant and highly excited Fanny—'go on.'

'I know you'll laugh heartily at it,' snickered Hollowell.

'Very likely, dear,' said Florence, beginning to grow impatient; 'but let me hear it!'

'Well, then,' said Hollowell, 'I was so certain I read your character correctly, that I didn't think it worth while to inform you before marriage——' and again he paused to indulge in a few premonitory symptoms of cachinatory explosion.

‘Yes, love,’ repeated Florence for the fourth time, and her anxiety had now reached an almost painful pitch.

‘That I hadn’t a cent in the world!’ said Hollowell—and having at length succeeded in getting off the ‘good joke,’ he gave the fit of laughter which he had been all along smothering, free vent.

‘O, no, no, no!’ cried Florence, distractedly, after she had regained the power of speech, of which the sudden terrible announcement had deprived her, ‘you don’t mean that—you are playing with me to try me—is it not so?’

‘Mean it!’ said Hollowell, alarmed at the alteration in his wife’s demeanor, and in his turn growing serious; ‘mean it? To be sure I do! What then? Didn’t you just say that it was only necessary one of the parties to a marriage should possess wealth?’

‘O, lost, lost! Duped! ruined!’ cried Florence, bursting into an agony of tears, wringing her hands, and pacing frantically up and down the room.

‘Why, you don’t mean to say that you—that is, that your father is not rich—not worth two hundred thousand dollars?’

‘Begone, sir!’ cried Florence, in a voice of thunder, suddenly checking herself in her mad career, and looking daggers at the man she had chosen for her liege lord, ‘begone, sir, and never let me see your hateful face again!’

‘Wait a bit,’ said Hollowell, with imperturbable coolness ‘if it comes to that, I believe the law invests me with some authority here, which I shall make bold to exercise if you don’t observe a more respectful demeanor. Present appearances would seem to indicate that I have made a very sad mistake, and although I sympathise deeply with you, I can’t at the same time keep from thinking that I have been most egregiously swindled. However, I am willing to compromise the matter reasonably—get the old boy to give me a thousand, and you shall never lay eyes on me again.’

Florence could only sob hysterically.

‘What, no answer to so reasonable a proposition?’ exclaimed Hollowell, deprecatingly, ‘well, then, say eight hundred, and that’s the very lowest figure. You will be willing to give double that after having lived with me a week, so you had better close with me at once.’

‘Detestable, black-hearted brute!’ Florence managed to articulate, and then rushing suddenly from the room she sought the presence of her father.

As soon as he found himself alone, Hollowell dropped into a chair, and uttered a prolonged whistle—this was followed by a deep-drawn sigh, and then he muttered to himself, ‘I’m *sold*, that’s evident, and if anybody had made the assertion two months ago that such a thing was possible, I should have laughed at it. Was Emory mistaken when he told me the amount of the old man’s wealth, or did he gull me purposely? The latter, I’ll bet my life. But he didn’t get so much the better of me after all. I’m a thousand ahead of him yet, and if I know myself, I’ll keep my advantage. I wonder what old Grant’ll say when his daughter informs him she has drawn a blank? It is quite evident now that he was an interested party in the affair, and I have no doubt he’ll storm terribly. Well, let him. His storming will do no good—I have him on the hip—his daughter is my wife, and if I am forced to leave here, she must leave with me. Not that I wish her company. O, no, on the contrary, I must get rid of her, but not till I have made something by the speculation. This is the fourth time I have tried the same dodge in different parts of the Union, and I have never failed yet to realize something.’

While Hollowell was thus communing with himself, a quick tread was heard in the entry, the door opened suddenly, and the old merchant stood before him. His aspect, always stern and forbidding, was now truly frightful to behold. The large veins upon his temple were swelled almost to bursting by the hot blood which anger had forced into them, his thin lips twitched nervously with suppressed rage, and his savage eyes

sparkled with the fire of hate, as he glared furiously upon the object of his wrath.

Hollowell was not at all disconcerted, but met the fixed gaze of his father-in-law with an air of the most perfect indifference, and merely throwing one leg over the other, and settling himself comfortably in his seat, he said, in a tone of self-possessed assurance—

‘Rather a disagreeable matter, this, eh, old fel.? Unlooked-for, wasn’t it? So it was to me. Take a seat, and make yourself comfortable. Let’s talk the matter over pleasantly, and I’ve no doubt we shall succeed in coming to some satisfactory arrangement. I ain’t a hard man to deal with.’

‘Leave this room immediately,’ said the old man, in a voice of stern command, at the same time pointing towards the door.

‘Certainly, if you wish it,’ replied Hollowell, in the most affable tone imaginable. ‘Is my wife ready to accompany me?’

‘Detestable wretch!’ roared the old man, now losing all command of himself. ‘Begone, at once, if you would not have me murder you! And he advanced a step, as if with the purpose of forcibly ejecting the object of his ire.

‘One moment—one moment, *if you please!*’ said Hollowell, persuasively. ‘Just think this matter over a bit before you do anything rash. We have humbugged each other—there can be no question about that—but, under the circumstances, would you not be acting a wiser part to compromise the affair than to have the story get all over St. Louis? If you eject me, of course people will think it strange, and I shall be obliged, in self-defence, to make the whole matter public, for I cannot afford to lose my standing in society. On the other hand, all I require from you is, that you furnish me with money enough—say a thousand dollars—to pay my travelling expenses to some distant part of the Union, and then the story can go abroad that I have started on a business tour, and I

will never trouble you again. If you are very short, and cannot raise the required sum at once, I am in no particular hurry—I can remain here till you do get it, and things can go on as usual. Don't you see how much better this would be?"

'O, villain! villain—heartless, despicable villain!' groaned the wretched old man, as he sank into a chair, and, unable longer to control himself, wept like a child.

'I don't know that there is much to choose between us,' said Hollowell, provokingly. 'We were playing for a stake, and I managed to get a point the best of the game—that's about the true state of the case, as I view it, and I don't see why *you* should grumble if *I* don't.'

'Hark you!' said the old merchant, suddenly rising to his feet, 'you have me slightly in your power, and you feel your advantage, but do not presume too much upon it. I agree to the terms proposed by you, conditionally. You may stay here till I am prepared to send you off, but, in the interval, I require that you shall not even look at, much less speak to, either of my daughters or myself. If you do not feel disposed to agree to this, be gone instantly, and make public what you think proper. Your answer, sir!' And he stood scowlingly awaiting the reply.

'Rather hard terms,' said Hollowell, after a moment's reflection, 'but I suppose I can't do better than accept them. I am always willing to accommodate, and so it's a bargain.'

'Enough!' said the old man, from whose face every appearance of grief had now vanished; and, drawing himself up to his full height, with a contemptuous curl of his lip, he strode out of the apartment.

A month rolled gloomily by, after the marriage of Hollowell and Florence—a month of indescribable wretchedness to the members of the Grant family—when suddenly the portentous cloud which had so long hovered over the house of Durand, Emory, Grant & Co., burst in its fury, and the firm was declared bankrupt. Certain outstanding notes were protested,

and the concern was obliged to wind up. It was a severe blow to the old merchant, although he had for some time anticipated it, for he was utterly ruined, and knew not which way to turn. His partners were more fortunate than himself, for they had something to fall back upon; they were shrewder business men, and knew better than to risk their all in any enterprise. Emory's name had never been erased from the books of the concern, and Mr. Grant, of course, supposed him to be yet a partner. He had no reason to think otherwise, for that individual had been regularly consulted in every important matter relating to the business of the house, and was in constant correspondence with the firm. Immediately, therefore, upon the abrupt termination of the business affairs of the establishment, a full statement of the case, duly certified, was sent to Emory, and this was accompanied by a private letter from Mr. Grant, giving a full account of his domestic troubles, revealing the true state of his finances, and asking advice and assistance in his dreadful extremity.

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## CHAPTER XII.

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It is, perhaps, unnecessary to inform the reader that Everard Emory was perfectly well acquainted with all the facts relating to the failure of the concern in which he was supposed to be a partner, long before he received any intelligence thereof from St. Louis—and furthermore that it was through his instrumentality the result had been so suddenly brought about. There was nothing in Mr. Grant's letter, therefore, to surprise him, save the fact that Cornelius Hollowell had turned out to be a penniless adventurer—one of that numerous class who live entirely by their wits. This did indeed astonish him, and not only did it astonish him but it filled him with vexation and disquietude. He had always flattered himself that he possessed a perfect knowledge of human nature—an intuitive perception of character which would enable him to tell his man at a glance—and the idea that he could so easily be deceived lowered him somewhat in his own estimation. Nor was this all—the recollection of the promissory note transaction at once came up in his mind, and he began to fear that he had been swindled as well as misled. Having arrived at this conclusion in his own mind, he determined with all possible despatch to ascertain whether his apprehensions were well founded or not,

and with this view he hastened to answer the bankrupt merchant's letter.

He commenced his epistle by sympathizing with Mr. Grant in his misfortunes, and at the same time, with well-feigned sorrow, blaming himself for having been, though innocently, the cause of a portion of his trouble. He stated that he would willingly have borne his own losses, if his friend could have escaped, and that he would do everything in his power to assist him in regaining his fallen fortunes. 'Business,' he wrote, 'is rather dull at present in New York, but there is every prospect of a brisk season when the fall trade opens. I have entirely abandoned mercantile pursuits myself, and devote my attention exclusively to real estate and railroad stocks, but this need not prevent my looking out for you. If I might advise, you would do well to settle up your affairs at once, and remove with your family to ——, where I am at present residing. Here you can stay during the summer months, and in the Fall, if anything favorable in the way of business offers, you may command both my purse and my influence. I feel that as I was mainly instrumental in causing you to embark in a speculation which has swallowed up your capital, I should in some way assist you to regain it, and if you think favorably of my proposition, drop me a line immediately on the receipt of this letter, and I will secure you a house near to my own of which you may take immediate possession.' After some further hypocritical expressions of regret and condolence, he went on to speak of Hollowell. He did not exactly like him, but never doubted that he was what he represented himself to be. 'Since you have enlightened me regarding him,' ran his letter, 'I am fearful that you and your daughter are not the only persons who have suffered from his dishonesty. I begin to suspect him of having in his dealings with me committed a crime which will bring him within the grasp of the law.' He then detailed the particulars concerning the promissory note, a duplicate of which he inclosed, and requested Mr. Grant to

call upon the parties concerned and ascertain if any such paper had passed through their hands. 'If it should prove to be all correct,' he wrote, 'well and good—but if the note is fraudulent he shall go to the State Prison as surely as he is a living man, if money and a close attention to the matter can send him there. In either case you will oblige me by not saying anything to him on the subject, but advise me as speedily as possible.'

When Mr. Grant received this letter he was sitting alone in the drawing-room of his residence, in no very pleasant frame of mind—he having just terminated a very disagreeable interview with his graceless son-in-law, who had called upon him to know when he would be likely to have the sum agreed upon between them as the price of departure, ready. The fact is, Hollowell began to think, after the old gentleman's failure, that he had, for once in his life, made a bargain which was likely to prove profitless, and in his fear of such a result he had, in the interview above alluded to, abated his original demand of a thousand dollars one-half. 'I'll tell you what I'll do with you, Governor,' was the last thing he had said, in his admirably cool, business-like manner, 'seeing it's you, and taking into consideration the fact that you've had rather hard luck lately, I'll split the difference and take five hundred, provided the money is forthcoming this afternoon.' The old gentleman had dismissed him with a growl and an imprecation, and sat brooding over his troubles when Emory's letter was put into his hand.

He broke the seal and an expression of satisfaction passed over his haggard countenance as he perused the proposition made by Emory. The thing of all others that he wished most to do was to leave St. Louis, and here was an opportunity of so favorable a stamp as to exceed his most sanguine expectations. The further he read the better he seemed pleased, till he reached that portion of the epistle which alluded to the impudent trickster who had just left him, and then an expres-

sion of mingled apprehension, hate and triumph rested upon his face. When he had finished, he folded the letter up and placing it carefully in his pocket, he muttered—

‘So, so!—my worthy son-in-law, among his other accomplishments, without a doubt, possesses the art of counterfeiting! Under the circumstances, I am rejoiced that I have made the discovery, for, although I cannot act in the premises just as I should wish to, on account of his connection with my family, the knowledge of his guilt will render it easy for me to send him off at once. It is unnecessary that I should prosecute any enquiries concerning this note. I feel satisfied that it is a rank forgery, and shall act upon the supposition alone. It would gratify me exceedingly to have the impudent scoundrel thrown into a dungeon, but I cannot accomplish this without exposing myself, and rendering my daughter ridiculous. Emory will, perhaps, be incensed against me if I allow the forger to escape, but I must do so even at the risk of his displeasure, for I cannot consent, while bowed to the earth with pecuniary misfortunes, to become the public’s laughing stock as well.’

Rising from his seat, he rang a bell, which having been answered, he directed that Hollowell should be sent to him. He then reseated himself, and shortly afterwards his son-in-law, in his habitual free-and-easy manner, made his appearance.

‘Ah, Governor!’ he exclaimed, in a tone of affected cordiality, as he deliberately drew up a chair and gracefully seated himself in front of the old man, ‘I didn’t anticipate the pleasure of having another interview with you so soon. Reconsidered the matter, eh? Made up your mind to raise the cash at once on account of the liberal discount which I made, eh? Going to start me off, right away, eh?’

‘Yes,’ answered the old gentleman, in a tone of such evident satisfaction as to somewhat astonish Hollowell, who had left him only a few moments previously, in a towering passion, ‘I have but this moment come into possession of means which

will enable me to settle with you immediately, and I have decided that you shall start upon your *business tour* this very day.'

'I am rejoiced to hear it,' answered Hollowell, rubbing his hands gleefully, 'for to tell you the truth I am tired of this locality. I am naturally, as you may have observed, of an active, business turn, and excitement is as necessary to my existence as water is to a fish's. I am positively dying of *ennui*, and the sooner I encounter new scenes and new faces the better it will suit me. For yourself, when I am gone, don't let the recollection of our brief, but rather intimate, acquaintance give you any uneasiness, for, unless the blind goddess should hereafter prove over-bountiful in the bestowal of her gifts upon you, it is not at all likely *we* shall ever meet again. If you do, however, at any future time come into the possession of more money than you have use for, and the knowledge of the fact reaches me, I may, if I am particularly short, call upon you for the remaining five hundred. Oblige me by saying as much to my dear wife, and now, if you please, I will take my leave.'

'That is precisely what I want you to do instantly,' remarked Mr. Grant, quietly.

'Then pass over the 'collateral,' 'said Hollowell, at the same time holding out his hand and agitating his digits—an action expressive of his desire to finger the money—'Pass over the 'collateral' and I'm off.'

'Before you start,' remarked the old merchant, in a significant tone, 'allow me to enquire if it makes any material difference to you which direction you take upon leaving here?'

'Not the slightest,' was Hollowell's ready, off-hand reply, 'North, East, South, or West, it's all the same to me—I am a perfect cosmopolite—but why do you ask?'

'I didn't know but what I could get you to transact a little business for me in New York,' said Mr. Grant.

'Certainly—with the greatest pleasure,' replied Hollowell,

who, notwithstanding he managed to preserve his imperturbable demeanor, began to feel very uneasy in view of the calm, self-possession evinced by his father-in-law, who was usually so turbulent and boisterous when conversing with him—‘what is the nature of the business?’

‘I merely wish you,’ said Mr. Grant, fixing his eyes full upon those of Hollowell, and assuming a truly stern look, ‘to be the bearer of a letter from myself to one Everard Emory. It contains the intelligence that a certain promissory note for a thousand dollars of which he is in possession, has, upon enquiry, turned out to be a forgery.’

A death-like pallor crept over the features of the conscience-stricken Hollowell, his air of mock-suavity and bravado, instantly changed to one of cringing servility, and the cold sweat stood in large beads upon his forehead, as he quailed beneath the basilisk-like gaze which was fixed upon him.

‘What! do you hesitate,’ continued the old merchant, in a tone of sarcasm, ‘to do me so slight a favor? you are not the friend I took you to be! But aside from your friendship for me, your own credit demands that you should be the bearer of my letter to Mr. Emory, for the individual who is supposed to have forged the note in question made use of your name. You owe it to yourself, therefore, to explain away any doubts which may arise as to sully your fair fame.’

‘Spare me!’ said the now-alarmed swindler, falling at the old man’s feet, and clasping his knee—‘spare me, for the love of God! Don’t have me arrested! I never was in prison, and it would cause my death!’

‘What! you don’t mean to say that you are the guilty person!’ cried the old man, tauntingly—‘you, who, in self-defence, and to preserve your *standing in society*, would be obliged to make public the particulars of your marriage, if ejected from my house! You guilty of so heinous a crime as forgery! Impossible! I can’t believe it!’

‘Mercy! mercy!’ was all that the poor wretch who grovelled at his feet, could utter.

‘How about five hundred dollars *now*?’ continued the old man, with a fiendish chuckle, ‘I suppose you would willingly give me a receipt in full of all demands, *seeing that it is me*, and say no more about it—is it not so?’

‘I will do anything which you demand,’ was the reply, ‘so that you will not have me arrested.’

‘Poor, pitiful villain!’ cried the old man, suddenly changing his tone of quiet, biting sarcasm to one of relentless hate, ‘dearly shall you pay now for the bitter tears you have wrung from me, and the indignities you have heaped upon me! you shall starve, toil, suffer and rot in prison!’

A look full of deep and deadly vengeance settled upon the gloomy brow of Hollowell, as he raised himself from his prostrate position, and stood erect before his tormentor. The old merchant did not mean what he said—he did not wish to send his son-in-law to prison, for reasons with which the reader is already acquainted, but it delighted him to witness his throes of agony, and therefore he threatened him. Hollowell, however, fully believed that the old man would be as good as his word, and having exhausted all his entreaties, he determined to pursue another course of action.

‘Then nothing short of my incarceration within the walls of a prison will satisfy you,’ he said, in a voice husky with passionate emotion.

‘Nothing!’ exclaimed the old man, violently—‘nothing! You shall, for once in your life, know what it is to labor—you shall groan under heavy burdens with a task-master at your back, feed on prison fare, and repose your delicate limbs on a pallet of straw; you shall be pushed from post to pillar; subject to the tyranny of a keeper; a thing to scoff at and to beat; the most contemptible of all objects—a miserable felon! And I shall see it all—I shall come occasionally to look at you, for

I am curious to know what effect such treatment will have upon a man of such high standing in society.'

The old man paused to see what effect his language would produce upon his listener, but scarcely had the last word left his lips, when Hollowell, with the bound of an infuriated tiger, sprang upon his throat.

'You shall never live to witness such a gratifying sight!' he hissed between his set teeth, and then commenced a desperate struggle for life or death. Mr. Grant, although the weight of years was upon his head, was a powerfully-built man, and possessed great muscular strength. Hollowell, on the contrary, was slightly-built and rather weak, although he possessed the advantage of youth, and was more agile and wiry than the merchant. His object was to secure a firm hold of the old man's ample cravat, and to choke him to death by twisting it, before he could give the alarm. He was successful in making good his grasp, but before he could succeed in suffocating the old merchant sufficiently to weaken him, the latter, by a determined effort, broke his hold, and was about bearing him to the floor by main strength, when Hollowell, by a dexterous twist of his body, jerked clear from him, and retreating a few paces, pulled from the inside pocket of his coat a small pistol, and fired. At the same instant, Mrs. Dunscomb, who had been alarmed by the scuffle while passing the door, entered the room, and the ball from the pistol, which flew clear of its intended victim, went crashing into her skull, and without groan she sank upon the floor, a corpse. Clearing the room at a bound, Hollowell gained the street, and made good his escape, leaving the old merchant transfixed with horror at the spectacle before him.

By this time not only was the entire household fully aroused, but people came pouring in from the street to learn the cause of the tumult, and many were the expressions of consternation which fell from the lips of the assemblage as they gazed upon the features of the murdered woman. 'Who shot her?'—

‘What did he do it for?’—‘Has he escaped?’—and a thousand other interrogatories of a like nature, were heard among the excited multitude both inside and outside of the merchant’s dwelling, till at length the Coroner, who had been notified, made his appearance, empanelled a jury, and proceeded in due form to investigate the melancholy transaction. There was no witness to the bloody deed save the old merchant himself, and when placed upon the stand to testify, he determined, in order to avoid the exposure of his family affairs which must necessarily follow a true statement of the case, to manufacture a story which would pass current, and at the same time obviate the necessity of his revealing what he wished to keep to himself. Accordingly, he stated that upon entering his drawing-room suddenly, he had detected a man in the act of robbery—that he had attempted to arrest him, when a struggle ensued, in the course of which the robber discharged a pistol, the bullet from which missed him and took effect in the head of the housekeeper, who entered the room just at the time the shot was fired, doubtless drawn to the scene by the noise of the scuffle. His testimony was clear and straightforward. It was, moreover, fully sustained by the evidence of other witnesses. A number of persons had seen a man emerge hurriedly from the house, and rush off up the street, but he appeared and disappeared so suddenly that it was impossible for them to note his general appearance even, much less to scrutinize his features. The jury, therefore, could only find that the unfortunate deceased had met her death at the hands of some unknown person, and thus the affair was summarily disposed of.

The sudden and awful death of the good old woman was a terrible blow to Estelle, who now felt that she was, indeed, alone in the world, for since the flight of her lover her sisters had resumed all their former ill-treatment of her. Fanny and Florence were only shocked at the circumstance—not grieved. They, of course, thought it necessary to swoon at the sight of

blood when the melancholy spectacle first met their eyes—this was due their characters as young ladies of approved refinement and delicate nerves ; but, after the excitement consequent upon the holding of a coroner's inquest in the house had passed over, and the body of the unfortunate deceased had been prepared for burial, they only regretted that the thing should have happened when money was so scarce and carriage hire so expensive, and wondered what disagreeable circumstance would happen next to excite their shattered nerves. While they were thus heartlessly complaining in the drawing-room, their sorrow-crushed younger sister was lamenting over the corpse of her dearly-prized foster-mother in another part of the house. The bereavement seemed the more dreadful to the poor girl because it was so sudden. But a few short hours previously the form which now lay cold and inanimate before her, had enfolded her in its warm embrace, and the tongue now mute had whispered words of hope and consolation to her despairing heart—but whose bosom should she nestle in now ?—whose tongue, in accents of unspeakable tenderness, should bid her live on, love on, hope on, and trust in Heaven ? ‘ O, why am I thus left alone ! ’ she cried, in her agony, as she gazed upon the placid features of the dead—‘ Would that I, too, could die ! ’

Poor child ! She lacked that philosophy without which life, under the most favorable auspices, must be burdensome—she could not find a soothing balm for her heart in the teaching that her loss was her darling foster-mother's gain—she could not recognize the truth of that doctrine which makes

“ All partial evil, universal good.”

No, she was a creature of extremes—whatever passion predominated in her when excited, for the time being swallowed up every other—her love, and her hate, her joy and her sorrow were alike limitless, but they could not by gently mingling, soften and render each other tractable. They operated singly,

and independent of each other. There was but one avenue by which her interior sensations could make themselves visible to the outward eye, and this admitted but one passion at a time. It would have been fortunate for Estelle had her nature been different—she could then better have sustained the trying part which in the drama of life had been allotted to her. While Mrs. Dunscomb was living the child had striven with all her might to gain the mastery over herself, because she was constantly taught to do so, but all her resolves to this end perished with the being who had called them forth, and when she saw her preceptress laid in the grave she did not even try to control herself, but gave way to the most ungovernable grief.

It was not until two weeks after the funeral of Mrs. Dunscomb had taken place that Mr. Grant made his daughters acquainted with the fact that Hollowell was both a forger and a murderer. When he did so, Florence came near fainting again, but altered her mind when it occurred to her that there was nobody present to catch her, and contented herself with exclaiming hysterically, ‘The monster! O, that I should have married such a wretch!’ Fanny merely gave expression to a prolonged ‘O-o-o-o!’ but Estelle fixed her passionate black eyes upon her father with a searching gaze, and demanded to know why he had not proclaimed the villain’s name?

‘Because I did not wish to expose myself,’ was the reply.

‘Father!’ cried the young girl, angrily, ‘had anybody but yourself told of this I should have charged them with falsehood. What! because one of your daughters was unfortunate enough to marry a scoundrel, are you to allow him to commit murder with impunity beneath your own roof? Is it just that you should suffer him to escape through the fear of exposing some foible of your own by denouncing him? If this is *your* idea of right it is not *mine*, and I am determined that his name shall be exposed.’

‘Why, Estelle!’ exclaimed the merchant in a tone of alarm,

‘ what do you mean, my child ? You would not have your old father thrown into prison, would you ? By pursuing the course which I did, I have made myself amenable to the law, and should the fact get abroad my arrest would follow immediately.’

‘ I did not think of that,’ replied Estelle, ‘ and for the present he is safe, but the day may come when I shall be under no restriction, and if I can reach him then, dearly shall he answer for the murder of one of the best and purest women that ever lived !’

‘ Dear me, how indignant !’ tittered Fanny.

‘ Quite a savage, I declare !’ exclaimed Florence.

‘ It is a pity,’ quietly said Estelle, turning her eyes upon the last speaker, ‘ that you do not possess a portion of that blunt honesty which belongs to the character of the savage—in that case you would never have called the object of my indignation, husband.’

The blood rushed into the face of Florence at this allusion to her unfortunate marriage, and she was about to retort sharply, when Mr. Grant interfered and put an end to the dispute. He then informed his daughters of the offer which had been made him by Everard Emory, and told them that he had dispatched an answer accepting it. This announcement gave the greatest satisfaction to all concerned ; Fanny and Florence, in particular, were delighted with it, for since their father’s failure they had been ashamed to look an acquaintance in the face, and the wish uppermost in their hearts was to get away from St. Louis. Even Estelle, although deeply attached to the home of her early associations, was now anxious to leave it. It had seemed lonely enough after James Ely’s departure, but it was doubly desolate after the death of her foster mother, and she felt as though a change of scene would be a relief to her. It was not long before the wishes of all were gratified, for in two weeks after Mr. Grant

had notified them of his intention to change his location, he and his family were safely domiciled in —, under the care and patronage of Everard Emory.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

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ONE night, about a month after the events just narrated, among a crowd of fashionably-dressed youths who had assembled in one of the brilliantly-lighted Broadway saloons in New York, devoted exclusively to the fascinating amusement of billiards, might have been seen two young men who had chosen a table apart from the rest, and were apparently as deeply interested in the conversation which was going on between them, as in the game they were playing. One of them was Robert Barker, the youth whom Helen had heard familiarly addressed as Bob while she was peeping through the keyhole of the infamous house into which she had been inveigled, and the other was Samuel Slocumb, his bosom friend, and the companion of his nocturnal rounds. Both were young men of high respectability—that is, they both had rich fathers who allowed them an unlimited supply of pocket money, and did not think it worth while to enquire in what manner the same was expended. It is true they were aware that their sons were absent from home sometimes for a week on a stretch, without extending their peregrinations beyond the limits of Manhattan Island, but then they argued, ‘Boys will be boys, and there is no use in trying to put old heads on young shoulders—let them have their way, and they will soon grow tired of roving around, and settle down into quiet, staid sober citizens.’ With such a *carte blanche* as this extended to

them, it would have been wonderful if the youths in question had not made up their minds to live as 'fast' as possible, and accordingly they devoted their attention to but one study, and that was the study of what is commonly, but erroneously termed pleasure. During the winter months, New York offered sufficient attraction for them, but in the summer season their time was divided between Newport, Saratoga, and other fashionable resorts of a lesser note. On the morning preceding the night of their introduction to the reader, they had just returned from a visit to ——, where Emory's summer residence was situated, and where they had seen sufficient to furnish them with matter for some little conversation, although they had not met with attraction strong enough to keep them there.

'I say, Sam,' said Robert Barker, as he chalked the end of his queue, preparatory to trying a difficult *caram*, 'that Estelle Grant is rather a fascinating specimen of *de laine*—ain't she?'

'Passable,' answered Sam, 'only passable—she has a pretty figure, and her features are well enough, all but her eyes—but I don't like her eyes—there's too much of the devil in them to suit me.'

'That's just what I admire most!' exclaimed Bob; 'spirited! none of your faint-away milk-and-water damsels, but a real 2:40 institution when she's started, or you can shoot me! By the way, do you know that Harry —— is head over heels in love with her?'

'Yes,' replied Sam Slocumb, 'I believe he is looking rather anxiously in that direction, but he's barking up the wrong tree, and might as well give it up. That sanctimonious old dodger, Emory, has made up his mind to marry her, and when he determines upon anything it's as good as accomplished.'

'You don't suppose she'd marry him, do you?' said Bob, striking his ball so vigorously as to make it bounce again.

‘Well, I don’t hardly think she would, *from choice*,’ was the reply—‘but between you and me, I don’t believe she can avoid it.’

‘What do you mean?’ said Bob, stopping short in his play and gazing enquiringly at his friend.

‘I’ll tell you,’ said Sam Slocum—‘you know I’m rather fond of being posted up in all affairs of this kind, especially if there’s any mystery in the case—so I got into conversation with the ‘Biddy’ who officiates at Grant’s, as she was sweeping off the walk a morning or two before we left, and by dint of crossing her palm with silver, I learned that Emory had complete possession of the whole party, and could turn them whichever way he pleased.’

‘Did she tell you *why* he had such power over them?’ asked Bob.

‘No,’ was the reply, ‘she couldn’t—she went up from New York to take the situation there, and knew very little about the Grants, but she was terribly down on Emory, whom she called a ‘murdherin’ ould haythen,’ and made some allusion to his having injured her years ago. ‘They minds him as well,’ she said, ‘as meself minds the praste, and sorra the wan way they’ll go, only the way he tells thim. It’s well I know the poor girl’ll have to marry him, but it’s meself that would rather marry the divil than the likes of him.’

‘That Emory is a devilish queer sort of customer,’ said Bob—‘every thing he touches turns to gold, and he never has transactions with anybody but what he seemingly gets them entirely in his power.’

‘It would be a good idea to go up there when the marriage comes off and witness the ceremony, wouldn’t it?’ asked Sam.

‘Yes,’ answered his companion, ‘I don’t know but what it would, though I must admit it will seem rather hard to see such a crusty old customer bear off so fair a prize.’

By this time the brace of hopefuls had finished their game, and having settled with the marker, they sallied forth, and started on their usual nightly ramble about the city.

The facts which the inquisitive Sam Slocumb had managed to draw from the Irish servant girl, Kate O'Donnell, were known to many persons in ——, although not openly talked about. The persons composing the *coterie* in which Everard Emory moved did not consider themselves justified in too closely scanning the acts of a gentleman possessing such unbounded wealth, and bearing so spotless a character as did the smooth-faced deacon, and although they *would* wonder among themselves how it was that Estelle Grant, whose youth and rare beauty had won for her scores of admirers, among young men of fashion and respectability, could satisfy herself with the exclusive attention of a person so much her senior in years, and so different from herself in general characteristics—although they would sometimes venture to whisper that it was strange that Mr. Grant—evidently self-willed and fond of power—should have no voice in the government of his own affairs—still they never allowed their surmises to take the shape of free speech, for they would not have offended their saint-like neighbor for the world.

To tell the truth, the old merchant himself did not know how Emory had contrived to so completely deprive him of all authority over his own household. It was true he was the deacon's debtor, but no threats had thus far been used—no coercion attempted. On the contrary, Emory was extremely bland, affable and courteous—he never *ordered* that anything should be done—he merely *suggested*, but in such a way that Mr. Grant, though ever so much inclined, found it utterly impossible to go contrary to his wishes. He was a captive with his prison door wide open—a dictator without the power of speech. He was under the influence of a spell while in the presence of the hypocrite which he endeavored in vain to break. He was not the man, however, that he had

been. Grief and trouble had made sad inroads upon a naturally vigorous constitution—

“Sharp misery had worn him to the bone,”

and his mind suffered with his body. He was more peevish and fretful, if possible, than formerly, but less positive—his disposition to control remained, but his firmness had fled, and when Emory, after having prepared the way by various hints which he from time to time let fall, proposed for the hand of Estelle, the old man, though somewhat startled at first, could not refuse his consent, and the affair was settled as far as he was concerned.

With Estelle, Emory was obliged to use the greatest caution. He had made up his mind to possess her at any and every cost—not that she had inspired him with love, for that of course was a feeling of which he knew nothing, but her marvellous beauty had excited his lasciviousness, and, besides, with a desire to tyrannize natural to him, he wished to break her haughty spirit—to make her acknowledge him as her master. He was not long in discovering her weak point, but he did not at once attack it. He approached her gradually, with a bearing like that of a saint, and at first won her respect by a thousand little delicate attentions; he next, in a voice low and musical, discoursed of human life—its joys and sorrows, its hopes and its fears—he drew an affecting picture of a young heart deceived and hopes blighted—he spoke of a youth who had loved devotedly, but had been shamefully deceived—and when he had got thus far, and observed that his listener’s bright eyes were suffused with tears, he went farther, and acknowledged that such had been his fate in early life, and that he had lived on without hope of happiness in this world, till he had at last met with a sweet being whose glances struck like sunshine into his forlorn heart, and made a more delightful heaven of earth than he had known before even—then, as a deep-drawn sigh escaped her, he took her

passive hand gently in his own, and avowed that she was that sweet being—her's the glances that had irradiated his dull soul again.

She told him that she pitied him—from her soul she pitied him—but that she could not return his love. She did not say, however, that she would not marry him, and his success was as complete as he had wished. He felt certain that she was his—his beyond the possibility of a failure—for he had other means to win her besides the power of his eloquence; her sisters should sing his praises constantly, and her father's necessities should plead for him. He calculated rightly. Fanny and Florence had some new act of philanthropy to record on each succeeding day, and old Mr. Grant was affectingly earnest in his appeals to his daughter. He represented to her that without Emory he could do nothing; he was deeply in debt to him—owed him more, in fact, than he could ever hope to pay him; he was, besides, aged and friendless—he had toiled throughout many weary years to provide for her, and the least she could do now was to sacrifice a little feeling to insure his peace of mind; he conjured her to keep his gray hairs from being brought in sorrow to the grave—this and much more of a like nature did he say to her—and thus importuned day after day, how could she refuse? She yielded—she gave the fatal promise, and then indeed the last ray of hope in her heart went out, for the faintest possibility of a re-union with James Ely—her first, her last, her only love—was at an end.

Time sped on, and the day fixed upon for her marriage was fast approaching. She was not controlled in any wish or whim in the meantime. She went where she pleased, did what she pleased, made just such acquaintances as suited her, and was indeed the only actually free person beneath her father's roof. There was policy in this, for Emory was not sure of her till the law gave him the power to call her his wife. She was a constant visitor at the house of Mr. Miller,

the old gentleman alluded to in Part I. of this story, and he was extremely fond of her. He could not help feeling grieved at the alliance she was about to form, and often in the hope of getting her to make a confidant of him, so that he might, if possible, prevent the marriage from taking place, he took an old man's privilege, and alluded to the singularity of her choice, but all to no purpose, for she either avoided a reply, or else made some playful remark to the effect that she thought she would take the first that came along, for fear she might not get another offer. With all his knowledge of the world, however, Mr. Miller could not fail to observe a shade of sadness even in the young girl's pleasantry, and this was one reason why he introduced her to his god-son, Harry B——. He thought that the young man might, perhaps, accomplish what the old one had failed to do, and how far he was borne out in this idea the reader is already aware. Harry managed to fall deeply in love—he managed likewise to ascertain that the young lady's affections were pre-engaged—but he did not manage to find out why Estelle had resolved to marry Everard Emory. He only learned that she was the victim of circumstances over which she had no control, and that she did not love the man she was about to marry.

The day so full of importance to Estelle at length arrived, but it was to her a day rather of mourning than of rejoicing. She felt more like going to the grave than to the altar, and those who surrounded her seemed to be similarly affected. An air of sombre gloom pervaded everything around. The countenances of Fanny and Florence wore an expression, while they were dressing the bride, as though they were preparing a corpse for burial, while Mr. Grant moped about, the picture of despair. It was no feeling of regret at parting with a beloved relative which called forth these sensations of depression, but a leaden weight hung around the hearts of sisters and father, produced by the fear of an indefinable something in the future. Like wily gamblers who knew every card

in the pack, they had staked their all upon the turning of one, but trembled lest the spots upon it should change, after it was exposed to view.

The ceremony of dressing had been got through, and Estelle had retired to her room to collect her scattered thoughts previous to the arrival of the bridegroom. While reflecting upon the painful position in which she found herself placed, she heard a light tap at the door of her apartment, and upon bidding the applicant for admission enter, Kate O'Donnell, the hired girl, made her appearance. She was a stout, hearty, uncouth-looking Irish girl, about twenty-two years of age, with little restless blue eyes, which kept constantly turning in their sockets—except when she looked straight at an object—first to the right and then to the left, like the pendulum of a clock. Her hair was very light, almost flaxen, indeed; her face round and rosy; her mouth capacious, and well filled with large, yellow-colored teeth; her lips full and pouting; and her nose a queer looking article, something the shape of a pullet's egg. Her appearance, at a first glance, was that of an ignorant, careless, good-natured creature; but when excited by anger, she looked terribly vindictive, and her eyes possessed a decidedly crazy expression. It was the general impression, from a certain incoherence in her speech occasionally, that she was not exactly sane, and on this account she had gained the cognomen of Crazy Kate; but, although occasionally displaying great passion, she had never laid violent hands upon anybody, and was considered rather harmless.

'Iv ye plaze, mam,' she said, in a low tone, as though fearful of being overheard, at the same time advancing into the room, and closing the door behind her, 'ye arn't afther bein' married yit, are ye?'

'No,' answered Estelle, smiling, in spite of herself at the queer object before her—'the ceremony has not been performed yet; but why do you ask?'

‘ Ah, yis, that’s it—exactly—now, d’ye mind ?’ said the girl, mysteriously.

‘ Why, what a strange creature ?’ said Estelle, smiling ; ‘ what do you want, Kate ? Can I do anything for you ?’

‘ Yis, ye cud, iv ye wud,’ answered Kate, abruptly ; ‘ but ye wudn’t—an’ d’ye know the reason that ye wudn’t ?’

‘ No, I don’t,’ replied Estelle, good-humoredly ; ‘ what is the reason, Kate ?’

‘ May be it ain’t for the likes o’ me to be tellin’ ye, an’ the praste waitin’ for ye,’ answered Kate, an’ I won’t—but look-see ! Did you ever hear a story ?’

‘ Oh, yes,’ said Estelle, ‘ I’ve heard a good many stories.’

‘ *Did* ye, now ?’ exclaimed Kate, as though surprised at the admission, ‘ well, holt on, now, I’ll tell ye a story, will I ?’

‘ Well, yes,’ answered Estelle, ‘ if it isn’t too long, but I have not much time now. I must be going presently.’

‘ O, it’ll not take me long,’ said Kate, ‘ it’s a short story, but it has a long maning. This is it, d’ye mind, now ? Once there was a wolf—d’ye mind that ? a wolf ! a wolf !’ and her eyes sparkled at each repetition of the word till they glowed like balls of fire—‘ an’ he was in the habit of slaughterin’ lambs, and nobody cud catch him at it, bekase he had so much the way iv the fox wid him—well (and here the tears started into her eyes,) he killed two lambs that meself knew, afther he coaxed thim away from the flock, and thin he got his ugly eyes—may the devil burn him !—upon another, an’ I cudn’t save her, bekase the wolf was very powerful, an’ I darent cum betune thim to warn her, and so, God help her ! she was lost, so she was ! and bursting into an agony of tears, the strange being rushed abruptly from the apartment and disappeared.

CHAPTER XIV.

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A DISAGREEABLE feeling crept over Estelle after Kate O'Donnell had left her, for although she did not see how the disconnected, ambiguous and crazy-like rigmarole of the girl could in any way apply to her, she could not help thinking it strange that the wild creature should have taken such a time to converse with her, especially as she had never indulged in any such remarks before. She would have questioned her further, had she not so suddenly disappeared, and indeed she was turning over in her mind the propriety of calling her back, when Fanny entered the room and informed her that the carriages had arrived, and the party were all ready to start for church. They waited only for her. She strove to shake off the unpleasant feeling which oppressed her, and following her sister she joined the company assembled below, and an hour afterwards she stood before the altar as the bride of the unprincipled, hypocritical, merciless, marble-hearted Everard Emory.

The holy edifice was filled with the gay and fashionable sojourners in —, and a death-like silence followed the first words of the venerable pastor as he began the impressive marriage ceremony. Every eye was fixed upon the bridal group, and every ear was strained to catch the responses as they fell from the lips of the bride and groom. Estelle was

deathly pale and motionless as marble. She seemed to go through the ceremony mechanically and without a knowledge of what she was doing till called upon to answer the important interrogatory propounded by the minister, and then her bosom heaved convulsively as she slightly inclined her head affirmatively. Her mind had wandered far away from the scene in which she was then an actor. She had, in imagination, been back again to St. Louis, and was wandering hand in hand with James Ely through the little lane skirted with sweet wild flowers which led to the old school-house. She had followed up this train of thought, and, in a few short moments had reviewed her whole past life, and at the time she was recalled to herself, she was wondering in what part of the world the youth she had loved—nay, did even now love—so ardently, might be, and whether *he* had wedded another. No wonder, then, that her cheek flushed and her bosom heaved—no wonder that a tear glistened in her bright eye, and her heart swelled almost to bursting when the *real* suddenly and rudely usurped the place of the *ideal*. Nor was Estelle's the only face upon which a shade of sorrow rested. Dejection was painfully apparent upon the countenances of Fanny and Florence—and old Mr. Grant as he tottered forward to give the bride away, was the picture of woe. Emory was the only person during the ceremony who preserved his usual bearing. Haughty and erect he stood amid the sorrowing throng, with a look of triumph in his calculating eye, and exultation in his cold, feelingless heart.

At length the ceremony was ended, and the friends of the parties gathered around to wish them joy, but their congratulatory remarks and flattering speeches were painful to Estelle, who felt relieved when once more in her carriage and on the way towards home.

Bob Barker and Sam Slocumb were among the persons present in the church. They lingered about the doors till the

bridal party had departed, and when the sound of the wheels of the last carriage had died away, Bob remarked—

‘She is a glorious bride, and no mistake! I almost felt like deserting bachelorhood myself as I looked at her!’

‘I can’t say her appearance produced any such effect upon me,’ replied Sam Slocumb, ‘on the contrary, I cannot help thinking that Emory, shrewd as he is, has purchased a piece of property this time which will prove troublesome to him. Didn’t you observe how woe-begone she looked? Why, she actually shed tears as she nodded the important ‘yes!’’

‘A little frightened, that’s all,’ said Bob Barker. ‘That feeling ’ll wear off after she has been married a week or two—but, let the case go as it will, I’m inclined to think Emory will be boss in his own house. If he had the power to marry her against her consent, he will certainly have the power to control her now that she is his.’

‘Don’t be too sure of that,’ said Sam Slocumb, emphatically—‘I tell you she has that in her which will not brook restraint, or there is nothing in physiognomy—and if he undertakes to rule her by harsh means, he’ll catch ‘Hail Columby,’ with the variations, done up in the most approved domestic style.’

‘In that case we may look for a breeze speedily,’ remarked Bob Barker, ‘for I don’t believe Emory will ever allow any woman to control him.’

‘He may indulge her till he gets tired of her,’ answered Sam. ‘I’ll give them a year to live together, and then look out for squalls.’

‘Yes, both infantile and matronly!’ replied Bob, laughing at what he considered an excellent pun.

‘Who knows, now,’ said Sam Slocumb, after cogitating deeply for a few moments, ‘but what, if they should fall out and separate, she might accept the friendship and protection of a good-looking fellow like myself? Stranger things have happened.’

‘Why, I thought just now,’ answered Bob, ‘you regarded her as such ‘bad property!’’

‘O, as a *wife*,’ answered Sam. ‘As a wife, of course, but not as a *friend*! There’s a vast difference, you know—a vast difference.’

‘So there is,’ replied Bob, ‘but, in my opinion, there is just about as much likelihood of her becoming your *wife* as your *friend*.’

‘Time will tell,’ said Sam, confidently. ‘Of course, I don’t look upon it as a sure thing, but I shall keep a sharp look-out in this direction, so that if any opportunity offers I may embrace it.’

‘Yes, and the lady, too, at the same time,’ answered Bob, again laughing heartily at his own wit—‘but how will you keep yourself posted up in matters and things around here?’

‘By making a fast friend of Kate O’Donnell,’ answered Slocomb. ‘A few shillings occasionally will do that, and I may then know as much of their family affairs as they do themselves. All I have to do is to visit here semi-occasionally, when I have nothing better to do in New York, and that will be rather a pleasure than a trouble.’

‘Well, success to you,’ said Bob, ‘but I must say that you can get up a very large quantity of hope on a very small capital’—and, locking arms, the two worthies sauntered off leisurely in the direction of their hotel.

Hardly had they disappeared when George Cantwell emerged from behind one of the pillars in front of the church-porch, where he had, in concealment, been listening to their conversation.

‘Ha, ha!’ he chuckled, triumphantly, ‘is that your game, Sammy, my boy? Well, it would be a good one if you had it all to yourself, but, unfortunately for you, I must take a hand—not to play against you, however. O, no, I rather like your project—but then I want to make something out of it myself, if possible. I don’t know that I can, but there is no

harm in being prepared, if a chance offers, to take advantage of it,' and, whistling a low tune, he took his way towards Emory's house. Having arrived there, he admitted himself with his latch-key, and, entering the drawing-room, he summoned a servant, and bade her inform Mr. Emory he wished to speak with him. The servant went as directed, and shortly afterwards the bridegroom made his appearance.

An angry frown contracted his brow as he gazed at his despicable employee, and in a tone of displeasure, but almost in a whisper, he inquired—

'What has happened now, you bird of evil omen! You are eternally intruding yourself upon me when I least wish to see you. What has happened, I ask?'

'Nothing serious,' replied Cantwell, with provoking indifference.'

'Then what are you here for?' growled Emory.

'Well, I came to tell you,' said Cantwell, 'that a certain young lady, Jenny Mathews by name, has of late grown very suspicious of you, and if you do not wish to see her here soon, you had better call upon her.'

'She has no knowledge of my marriage, has she?' asked Emory, in some alarm.

'No,' replied Cantwell, 'I don't suppose she has—that is, no positive knowledge, but I know she suspects something of the kind, and with a jealous woman that's about as bad as if she was certain of it. At all events, she says you have neglected her long enough, and now if you don't call upon her, she will upon you.'

'Fool that I was,' said Emory, bitterly, 'to let her, in a moment of weakness, know anything about my residence.'

'But you didn't think of marrying then,' said Cantwell, as though anxious to find an excuse for his employer's imprudence

'That's very true,' rejoined Emory, 'but I had no business to place myself in her power under any circumstances. How-

ever, the mischief is done, and the thing now is to remedy it. Jenny must not come here, at least, not at present.'

'Then you must go there,' rejoined Cantwell.

'Won't money satisfy her?' snarled Emory, impatiently.

'I'm afraid not,' answered Cantwell, 'what she wants is marriage first, as per agreement, and as much money afterwards as you please.'

'D—n her!' exclaimed Emory, furiously, 'I wish she was dead!' Then, after a moment of profound thought, he continued in a tone of affected friendship, 'Don't you think, my dear George, that she might possibly be taken very ill, and die before assistance could reach her? Don't you think she might?'

'No,' said Cantwell, positively, looking at the same time straight in his employer's eye, '*I'm sure she can't*—there was a young lady once who fell sick and died very singularly, just after such a conversation as the present one between us had taken place, and after her death you seemed to think that I had a hand in her sudden departure to another world. This suspicion you have held as a rod over me to mould me to your wishes. Now, for fear of accidents, I feel constrained to say that I do not think Jenny Matthews can possibly be taken sick unless you append your signature to a paper certifying that such is your earnest wish—in that case she might possibly be ailing.'

'Scoundrel!' cried Emory, suddenly changing his manner, 'you forget that you are in my power—that I have evidence enough to hang you!'

'I don't forget anything,' replied Cantwell, with the most imperturbable self-possession—'I know that you are very rich and powerful, and that some time since you might have crushed me with a word, but I also know, as well as you do, that your principal witness against me, Jack Jacobs, died some two weeks since, and that you would find it a very hard matter to make out a case against me, even if you felt so disposed, which

you do not, for I am too deep in your counsels for you to make an enemy of me now. However, I do not wish to take any advantage of the influence you have reposed in me. The fact is we are necessary to each other, and may as well be friends. I want your money, and you want my services, which you shall always have, but not on the same terms as ever. Heretofore I have not only transacted your business, but taken the sole risk of the consequences, for you have so planned it that I could not possibly implicate you if I wished to do so. Hereafter we must have a different understanding. We must be on an equality. I am still willing to do the work, but you must share the risk. I hope we understand each other?

‘We do,’ said Emory, decisively, ‘and now you will oblige me by leaving these premises as speedily as possible, and never entering them again till you can do so with a clearer view of my true character. What! have you been so long intimate with me without learning that in my composition fear has no part? Are you so foolish as to suppose that I who never yet knew what it was to command and not be obeyed, could for a moment stoop to make terms with such a thing as you are? Begone, sir!’

‘Very well,’ said Cantwell, rising, and approaching the door, ‘and shall I inform Jenny Matthews that you are married, and fetch her up to visit you and your bride, and bear testimony to the truth of her story when she swears that you first abducted her from home, and then seduced her by the most solemn protestations of honorable marriage? Shall I, eh?’ And he grinned exultingly.

‘Yes,’ answered Emory, without being at all disconcerted, ‘but before you do so it may interest you to know that there is a certain document in existence which I can at any time cause to be exhibited, although I am not supposed to have any knowledge of it, which would bear rather hard against you if at any time you should be arrested on a capital charge. It is nothing less than a voluntary confession of murder in

which you are implicated made by one Jack Jacobs and witnessed by two persons who can be found when wanted—that's all!

A change came over the countenance of Cantwell, and his manner altered at once.

'I see,' he said, with an air of deference, 'that it is useless for me to attempt to out-general you, and I won't try it again. Now, then, what do you wish me to do?'

'Prevent the woman we are talking of from coming here,' said Emory, sternly; 'I don't wish you to proceed to extremities if you can avoid it, but she must not be seen here. Use what means you please, but keep her away. If she makes her appearance here you shall answer it—now, begone!'

Cantwell instantly, in the most obsequious manner withdrew, and Emory returned to the party from the midst of which he had been so unceremoniously called but a few moments before.

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## CHAPTER XV.

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SIX months of married life passed over the head of Estelle, and further than the disquietude sometimes occasioned her by the recollection of her unhappy love for James Ely, which would intrude itself in spite of her, she had no reason to regret the step which she had taken. Emory was still very kind, not only to her, but to her father and sisters. Mr. Grant and his two elder daughters, with the servant, Kate O'Donnell, still occupied the house which Emory had prepared for them next his own, in ——. They had never left it for any great length of time from the hour they first entered it. Emory

had taken his wife to New York when the fall months set in, and had invited her relatives to accompany them, but as there was nothing in the way of business offering to Mr. Grant, he felt better satisfied to stay where he was, and so, indeed, did his daughters, for, contemptible as were their general characteristics, they still had a feeling of pride which kept them from wishing to figure in fashionable city-life at the expense of one who was only related to them by marriage. After staying a while in New York, Emory started on a travelling tour with Estelle, and having visited a number of the Southern States, in doing which some four months were very pleasantly spent, again returned homeward, and at the request of Estelle, who had lost all relish for mingling with the world, and wished, for a while, to lead a retired life, he removed her to —, where she took up her residence with her father and sisters, although the winter was not yet over, and remained himself in the city, only visiting her once or twice at most during each week.

It was at this time (about six months in all, after Estelle's marriage) that one evening while Kate O'Donnell was engaged at her ordinary avocations in the kitchen of Mr. Grant's residence, the door suddenly opened, and the head of Mr. George Cantwell was thrust into the apartment.

'How are you, Kate?' he said, with a familiar nod.

At the time of the interruption, Kate was wiping a large-sized dinner plate, but she stopped in the midst of her task, and while an indignant look settled upon her face, she replied—

'It's little the betther I am for seein' the likes o' you, ye milk-faced thafe o' the world! Get out o' that!'

'Come, come, Kate,' said Cantwell, coaxingly, 'let by-gones be by-gones. Is it possible you still remember a matter that happened so many years ago?'

'Is it possible do I remimber it?' replied Kate, in a tone of surprise, 'why, ye devil's bird, d'ye think will I ever forget it? A father and mother turned into the sthreets in the dead o

winter, an' compelled to beg their bread from dure to dure!—d'ye think will I forget that? and a purty young crather that I'd ha' laid down me life for—though to be sure she was no kin to me—kilt and murdered, and ruinated entirely!—d'ye think will I forget that? May me soul niver have a restin' place in glory iv I forget it! Get out o' that, I say wance more, ye scum iv a scurvy pig's lavin's—there's p'isin in yer two bad lookin' eyes, so there is!

'I admit you've had some cause to complain, Kate,' said Cantwell, soothingly, 'but it was no fault of mine. I only acted by the direction of another, you know. I turned your family into the street, it is true, but I was forced to do so or lose my situation; and if I had not performed the disagreeable task somebody else would. As for Effie Johnson, I had no part in her undoing, and if she were alive, and you could have speech with her, she'd tell you so.'

'Ye-lie-she-wouldn't!' exclaimed Kate, in a great passion, and squeezing a whole sentence into one word, 'for I *do* have spache wid her every night. She's dead, that's thrue for ye—an' so is me father an' me mother, but that don't sthop me shpakin' to thim. They're always wid me whin I'm ashlafe, an' sometimes they whispers in my ear whin I'm awake, and they tells me you're a liar. But fhat d'ye want wid me, for the divil niver comes without a purpose?'

'I want to make friends with you, Kate,' replied Cantwell, in a tone of assumed sincerity.

'Iv that's fhat ye want,' replied Kate, determinedly, 'it's as well for ye to lave at wance, for till ye can raise the dead it's no friend o' mine ye'll be afther findin' yerself.'

'You'll think differently, Kate,' remarked Cantwell, with much humility, 'when I tell you what I want you to do. You have no great affection for Emory, I know, have you?'

'Affection for him,' answered Kate, a look of malignity lighting up her wild eyes. 'Oh yis, it's the big affection I

feel for him! Don't I wish I could show him how much I love him! *Don't I, though!*

'Does he know you are here?' asked Cantwell.

'He does know I'm here, in course,' answered Kate, 'for it's a hundred times he's seen me, but big bad luck to him, he don't know who I am—he don't recollect me.'

'There's the difference between him and me,' answered Cantwell, 'now, I knew you the moment I saw you. I never forget a countenance that interests me. I knew you at once, but I did not let Emory into the secret, and this ought to convince you that I am your friend. I want to serve you, Kate.'

'Well, thin,' said Kate, 'it's little I value the friendship iv a servant who wears the divil's livery. Ye can't be Misther Emory's friend an' mine at the same time, d'ye hear that, now?'

'Kate,' said Cantwell, stepping close to the girl, and lowering his voice to a whisper, 'I'll let you into a secret. I hate Everard Emory as intensely, nay, more intensely, than you do. For years he has held me under his brutal control, and he has ruled me with a rod of iron. Now I am determined to free myself from him the first opportunity that offers. In the meantime I wish to gratify my revenge a little. Here's a letter (and at the same time he took one from his pocket) which I stole from Emory. It is one which he received from his last victim, Jenny Matthews, since his marriage, I want you to take it to his wife, and tell her you found it somewhere about the house. You can hint at the same time that Emory must accidentally have dropt it from his pocket during one of his visits. As he has not recognised you, you can run no risk in doing as I wish you to, and Emory will doubtless himself believe that he has actually lost it.'

'An' d'ye think will it do him a har-m, if his wife gets it?' inquired Kate, anxiously.

'*Think,*' answered Cantwell, 'I *know* it will. He would rather face the devil himself than to look at his wife after she

has read that letter. He has had a nice, pleasant time of it thus far, and now I am anxious to vary the scene a little for him. Will you take the letter?’

‘D’ye you think wud I ate iv I was hungry?’ answered Kate, with alacrity, ‘to be sure I’ll take it to her, and iv it’ll ownly make *him* oncomfortable, I don’t care iv I die afther.’

‘That’s a brave girl!’ exclaimed Cantwell, approvingly, ‘and now I must go. Emory is to be up from New York to-morrow afternoon, and you had better put the letter into the hands of his wife in the morning so that she will be prepared to receive him properly. Do you understand, Kate, eh?’

‘I *do*!’ was the laconic reply, and Cantwell took his departure.

After he was gone, Kate unfolded the letter, and turning it over and over, she viewed it upon all sides, and at length muttered to herself, ‘It’s little good I’ll be doin’ by lookin’ at ye, for sure I can’t read ye at all at all—but I wish I cud, for I’d like to know iv the poor crathur it kem from has the power she should have to be able to cope wid the divil. Mrs. Emory shall have ye anyways,’ she concluded, as she refolded the letter, placed it safely in her pocket, and resumed her work.

True to her word, the next morning after breakfast Kate entered the drawing-room where Estelle sat alone, poring over the pages of the last new novel, in which she had become apparently deeply interested, and holding forth the letter, she remarked—

‘Here’s a letther I found upon the stairs three or four days ago, jist after the masther goin’ away, an’ I forgot to give it to ye till this moment, whin it’s just afther comin’ into me mind.’

‘Well, throw it upon the mantle-piece,’ said Estelle, carelessly, ‘and he’ll get it when he comes home.’

‘Mebbe it’s not for himself it is,’ remarked Kate, pertinaciously, still holding the letter, ‘mebbe it’s for some won else, an’ hadn’t ye betther look at it jist?’

Estelle withdrew her eyes from the book which she was reading and glanced at the superscription. She observed that it was addressed to her husband, and was about to throw it aside, when the delicate style of its chirography struck her and she was induced to open it. The first sentence which she read caused a sudden tremor to seize her, and laying aside her book, she said, with as much composure as she could command, 'you may go, now, Kate,' and the girl was about moving toward the door, when she added, 'you need not mention to any one that you found this letter.'

'Indade I'll not, mam,' was the answer, and the next moment Estelle was alone.

With a beating heart she recommenced the perusal of the epistle, which was a rather short one, and from the cramped and crooked style of the writing had evidently been penned by one suffering from nervous agitation. It was dated at Troy, some time previously, and ran as follows :

"EVERARD EMORY—*Sir*: There was a time when I would have commenced a letter to you differently, but your treatment of me lately has proved that you are unworthy my slightest regard. For two years now you have put me off with promises made only to be broken, till at length I have discovered that truth has no part in you—that you are a heartless villain—a hypocrite of the very worst stamp. Having made this discovery, I am satisfied that for me there is no more happiness in this life ; but one thing yet remains for me, and that is *revenge*. I will unmask you to the world. Thus far you have prevented my doing so, by removing me from place to place, and allaying my awakened fears by newly invented lies, but you shall do so no longer. In spite of all your pains to prevent it, I have gained the information that you are married, which, of course renders it impossible for you to render me the only reparation which I would accept at your hands, and if I am ever permitted to rise from the bed of sickness, upon

which I now lie, your wife shall hear, and from my lips, too, what a black-hearted fiend she has married. You have falsely imagined all along, sir, that because you possessed immense wealth you could make merchandize of a friendless girl's affections, and when I have urged you, as I repeatedly have done, to redeem your oath, solemnly sworn in the sight of Heaven, to make me your wife, you have either put me off with some lame excuse, or insulted me with the proffer of a tithe of your ill-gotten wealth. Devil! can your gold restore my peace of mind? Can it render me virtuous, and happy, and free from guilt, as I was before I knew you? God of Heaven! when I reflect upon *all* that you have urged me to it seems that reason will desert her throne and I shall go wild! For the second time I am lying upon a sick bed in this den of horror, the murderess of my own offspring! I know, I feel, that a terrible retribution must follow this dreadful guilt, but I shall not suffer alone, for you it was—you, the father of my unborn babes—who urged me, by threats and promises, and implorations, to the commission of the hellish crime, and you are equally culpable. I may, perhaps, not live through this last trial, but think not that you will escape punishment, even if my guilty soul does wing its flight to another world before I have the power to call you to account—for be assured of this: we shall meet hereafter at the bar of an offended Deity. *There*, there can be no concealment, and your black deeds will speak trumpet-tongued against you. For the present I have done, but you shall hear from me again, perhaps when you least expect it. My earnest prayer is now that before I die I may see your wife.

“Once your passive victim, but now your inveterate enemy,

“JEANETTE MATTHEWS.

“P. S.—I have heard that among your other exploits you succeeded, through your base tools, in entrapping a lovely and innocent young creature, of the name of Helen Wallace, into the infamous den into which I was first introduced. Thank

Heaven, she escaped from thence unspotted, and I sincerely hope that at some day or other this villainous transaction, among others, may be traced home to you. J. M."

It would be impossible to describe the sensations which Estelle experienced after she had finished the perusal of this letter. Fear, doubt, and rage took possession of her by turns, and she knew not at what conclusion to come. At first she was fearful that the letter contained nothing but truth—that she had indeed married a wretch, for whose diabolical crimes she could find no name—then it occurred to her that perhaps it was only a plan to injure her husband, and then again her mind reverted to the story of the wolf and the lamb so singularly related by Kate O'Donnell, on the day of her marriage, the application of which was now palpable, if Emory was indeed the villain which the latter represented him to be, and burning with rage as she thought of this, she summoned the girl, and striving to put on an air of indifference, she said:—

'Kate, on the morning of my marriage you commenced telling me a story which you did not finish, and it has just occurred to me that I should like to hear the termination of it. Sit down and relate it now, won't you?'

'Did I tell you the story iv the wolf and the lambs?' questioned Kate, as though surprised.

'Of course you did,' answered Estelle, 'surely you cannot have forgotten it already.'

'I didn't tell you any names, did I?' asked Kate.

'No,' replied Estelle, 'and that's just what I wish to inquire about—what were the wolf and his victims called?'

'Which?' said Kate, seemingly very much puzzled.

'Nonsense,' answered Estelle, somewhat angrily, 'you understand me well enough. Come, tell me at once.'

'An' fhat'll I tell ye?' asked Kate, still preserving the same puzzled expression of countenance.

'Kate,' said Estelle, impressively, at the same time regarding the girl with a look of fixed scrutiny, 'answer me honestly

—do you know anything derogatory to my husband's character as a man of integrity? If you do, don't hesitate to tell it, and I promise you, upon my sacred honor, no harm shall come to you in consequence.'

'You won't tell him who tould ye?' said Kate, interrogatively.

'Never,' replied Estelle, 'as I am a Christian.'

'Then,' was the girl's reply, 'I'll tell ye. It's a hard thing to say to a lady that's only just after being married, but your husband is the bloodiest vilyan unhung, so he is, an' there's more nor myself knows that same.'

'Be careful, Kate, how you make assertions,' said Estelle, 'what proof have you that Mr. Emory is a bad man?'

'The proof of me own ears and eyes,' answered Kate, 'and that better 'ud I want? I know that he turned me poor ould father an' mother an' mesilf out into the sthreet, an' it biting, bitther winter at the time—I know, too, that they died from the effects iv it—may their souls rist in glory foriver an' iver!—I know that he was the manes of killin' Thomas Gardener the shoemaker in the same may—I know that he led Effie Johnson and Kate Collins (two swate, pretty sewin' girls, that me mother washed for whin mesilf was a wee thing) astray—I know that Kate wint home to her friends when he turned her off, and died broken hearted, and I know that Effie wudn't go home, bekase she was too proud, so she went on frim bad to worse, till she got on Blackwell's Island, an' there she died. I know that that same Effie Johnson gev me medicine wid her own hands and bought delicacies wid her own money, whin I was sick and likely to die, an' I know I'll niver forgit her kindness (God be good to her sowl!) nor the ill-treatment to her of the black-hearted murderher that caused her death—may the devil roast him at a slow fire troughout the countless ages iv eternity, and the day afther, the heartless vagabone!'

‘O, Kate,’ cried Estelle, bursting into tears, ‘why didn’t you tell me of this before I was married?’

‘Bekase,’ replied Kate, ‘I was afeard to—nobody iver crossed him yit, that he did not ruinate thim after, an’ sure I dhreaded he might find out that I tould you. But I hinted to you, an’ it’s me belief that iv ye’d ’a prissed me that time as ye did a bit ago, I’d a tould you any way.’

After her violent outburst of grief had somewhat subsided, Estelle dismissed Kate, and then settled herself to cogitate upon the best plan to be pursued under the circumstances.—Her first impulse was to take the letter to her father and sisters, and enlighten them as to the true character of the man she had wedded. She discarded this idea, however, almost as soon as it was conceived. The fact is, she did not repose much confidence in her relatives, and she feared they might take sides against her. She distrusted them not without reason. Emory had complete control over them all. They were dependent upon him, and were bound to think and act just as he wished them to, for should he take it into his head to cut off their supplies, they were beggars. She therefore resolved to await her husband’s return—then charge him in private with his perfidy, and hear what defence he had to make.

Accordingly when Emory arrived some hours afterwards, instead of meeting him with a smile and a cheerful greeting, as was her wont, she at once intimated her desire for a few moments’ private conversation with him, and led the way to their own sleeping apartment.

Emory had not the remotest suspicion of the true cause of his wife’s evident discontent. He imagined that something of a trifling nature had gone wrong around the house, of which she was about to complain, and as soon as they were safely in the apartment, and the door closed, he playfully attempted to throw his arms around her, at the same time remarking, good-humoredly—

‘What’s the matter now, pretty one? What has gone wrong? Has the dress-maker failed to fit you? Or has your favorite bonnet been carelessly crushed? Or has your magnificent shawl sustained a lasting injury? Or is your pet canary sick? Or what ails you?’

‘Perhaps when I have enlightened you as to the real cause of my trouble,’ replied Estelle, in a stern, uncompromising tone such as she had never before used, ‘you will not feel in so playful a mood. Tell me, sir, did you ever happen, in your progress through life, to make the acquaintance of a lady named Matthews—Jeannette Matthews?’

The interrogatory came so suddenly upon Emory, that for a moment he was terribly startled, and Estelle did not fail to observe it, for she was watching purposely the effect of the question. It was but for a moment, however, that the bold, bad man lost his self-possession, and then his brow was as placid as though nothing had happened to disturb his serenity of mind, and he answered pleasantly—

‘No, my dear, I never knew any such person—but why do you ask?’

Estelle was utterly surprised at this prompt and decisive denial of acquaintanceship, and was almost inclined to think that she had been too fast. Without altering her demeanor, however, she took the tell-tale letter from her bosom, and deliberately opening it before him, she resumed—

‘Will you tell me, then, if you please, how you ever came into possession of that letter?’

Emory took the epistle, and after hastily glancing over it, he replied without hesitation—

‘It would be hard to say how I came into possession of a thing which I never saw before in my life. Why, Estelle, is it possible that you have allowed the miserable trick of some envious wretch to awaken within you feelings of jealousy

and doubt? Shame upon you!—shame! I had hoped better things of you.'

'Can it be possible,' thought Estelle, 'that this man is the guilty wretch which Kate O'Donnell represented him to be? He does not start, or change color, or show any sign of guilt, and yet I know the girl cannot be so much mistaken.'

She stood undecided what next to say, till at length Emory broke the silence by asking—

'May I ask to whom I am indebted for this pleasant little domestic scene? Who is your informant, Estelle? What seventh son of a seventh son has been telling your fortune, for I confess I should like to consult the oracle myself.'

'Some day,' replied Estelle, quietly, 'you may find the opportunity which you desire, but at present I can only say that my oracle, so far as you are concerned, is an infallible one. I did not think until now that so much cunning and hypocrisy could exist in one person, and it is with mingled pain, mortification and shame, that I am forced to remember that that person is my husband.'

'Come, come, madam!' replied Emory, assuming a look of wounded dignity and virtuous anger, 'this abuse has gone about far enough, and I will bear it no longer! If I am to be made the victim of every malicious slanderer who comes along, I shall have a pleasant life of it before I die!'

'You are not likely to have a very pleasant one after you die!' exclaimed Estelle indignantly, 'for the number of your crimes preclude the possibility of your ever entering the abode of the blessed. You deny knowing the person alluded to in that letter. Tell me, then, can you find in any corner of your memory the record of such names as Effie Johnson and Catherine Collins?'

For the first time during the interview Emory was unmistakably disconcerted. All along he had imagined that the letter was the only proof which Estelle had of his misdeeds, and he had hoped to be able by stratagem to obviate any dif-

ficulty which might arise from that. But when he heard the names of two of his victims of years gone by mentioned he felt satisfied that his wife had had, in some mysterious way, an interview with some person intimately acquainted with his past history. Finding that concealment was longer useless, therefore, he put a bold face upon the matter, and exclaimed, while a frown dark and terrible settled upon his brow—

‘Well, madam, you have taken considerable pains to render yourself miserable, and if the current of your life should not, hereafter, run as smoothly as heretofore you will have yourself to thank for it. It is full time now, that I should take you in hand. I have been too indulgent with you all along—have allowed you too many privileges—it has caused you some trouble, doubtless, to arrive at the information you possess concerning my true character, but you have more to learn, and the rest will come easier—you will not be obliged to seek for it out of the house. Come, mistress, put by that frown, which I consider decidedly out of place, and endeavor to look more the character of a submissive wife.’

The rich blood mounted to Estelle’s cheeks, and her eyes sparkled with rage as she replied—

‘If you expect to control me as you have been in the habit of controlling every body else, you will find that you are laboring under a sad mistake. Had you humbly acknowledged your offences, and promised faithfully to atone for them by a life of penitence in the future, I might perhaps have been disposed to remain silent concerning your misdeeds, though I should never again under any circumstances have looked upon you as my husband—but your impudent bearing and evident callousness of heart make it painfully apparent to me that nothing is to be hoped for from forbearance, and I fear I shall be obliged to unmask you to the world, disagreeable as the task will be to me.’

‘Dare to utter one word of what you have learned,’ said Emory, seizing her by the wrist in his rage, and squeezing it

till she came near crying out with pain, 'and ten minutes afterwards a messenger shall be on his way westward, to make arrangements with the Governor of Missouri for a requisition to arrest your father on the double charge of compounding a felony, and being an accessory after the fact in a case of murder, and you shall be one of the principal witnesses! Ha, ha! Does that startle you? You see, I never do things by halves!'

'You are a villain!' said Estelle with furious indignation—  
'a deeply-dyed, desperate villain!'

'I am your husband!' was the cool reply, 'and will be obeyed! Let me see the slightest indication of displeasure upon that defiant face of yours, when abroad, and tremble for the consequences! At home, you may frown as much as you think fit, for since we have come to understand each other perfectly I shall like it all the better—but you must observe a respectful demeanor in public, or I shall feel constrained to punish you in private,' and frowning fiercely upon his now silent wife, he strode imperiously from the apartment.

'And this,' sobbed Estelle, when she found herself alone, 'this is the result of my departure from the fixed determination never to bestow my hand where I could not give my heart. What have I in the future to look forward to now? Misery! misery! misery! I am the slave of a brutal master, without a will of my own, and I must bear his rebuffs, his taunts, and his acts of cruelty, without daring to resent them—I must plod on, uncomplainingly, day after day, the passive recipient of his acts of petty malice and his soul-cutting sneers, constantly, unceasingly, unrelentingly administered!—No cessation, no hope of reprieve, no prospect of rest till death comes to my relief. Oh, oh, oh!' and she wept long and violently for some moments, when suddenly she ceased, and with a great effort once more regaining the mastery over herself she exclaimed, while a gleam of savage joy shone in

her grief-bedewed eyes, 'but there is one hope left me yet, and I must live to compass it! The hope of dear, darling, sweet revenge! A day of retribution must arrive sooner or later—and then, oh then, tremble thou demi-devil Everard Emory, for it will be my turn to triumph!' She arose and applied some cool water to her burning temples, then bathing and carefully wiping her eyes, she arranged her hair, and shortly afterwards made her appearance among her relatives entirely free from all traces of her late excitement.

Estelle had made up her mind to endure misery after the above scene had taken place, but she had not half calculated the extent of the troubles she would be called upon to bear. She had made no allowance for what she would have to suffer independently of her husband's ill-usage. She had forgotten that when he altered in his conduct towards her, those over whom he had control would be obliged to do the same, and accordingly no sooner did Fanny, Florence and the old man observe the change in Emory's demeanor towards her, than they, too, treated her more like a slave than the mistress of the house. Estelle might have retaliated. She might have brought destruction upon them all, although by so doing, she would have involved herself in the general ruin, but she did not wish to do so—she had a game to play, and was willing to bide her time.

In the meantime Emory was more hateful even than she supposed he could become. He had tried every means to induce her to declare who her informant was, and failing in this he racked his ingenuity to discover fresh means of making her miserable. He never once thought of Kate O'Donnell, for he had lost all recollection of her, and did not know in fact whether she was living or dead. He suspected Cantwell at first and taxed him with being concerned in the matter, but as that individual stoutly denied the imputation, and as upon strict enquiry he had not been seen around the premises and no letter had been received, he was forced in his own mind to

acquit him, and relinquish the hope of finding out the real informer.

Emory had reduced the business of torturing anybody in his power when he once set about it to a science, but he found that in attempting to break down the spirit of his wife and to render her humble and submissive, he had altogether a harder task before him than he had calculated upon. One of his favorite modes of torture was to taunt her with her poverty, and to regret that he had so far honored her as to marry her, when he might (so he averred) without trouble have procured her as a mistress—then he would speak of the indebtedness of her father to him, and boast of having kept the whole family from starvation—occasionally he alluded to the fact that she had a felon for a brother-in-law, and that more than likely her once very dear friend, young Ely, was also a felon—he was at least a fugitive and a vagabond upon the face of the earth.

And yet, with all his diabolical power to wring a proud heart like that which beat in Estelle's bosom, he could not succeed in forcing from her a single tear, or groan, or even a sigh. She bore it all with stolid indifference, and a person would have thought to look at her immovable countenance that she was past feeling, but this was a mistake, and Emory knew it well. In secret she gave vent to the feelings which she smothered in the presence of her husband, who felt satisfied that such was the case, and greedily gloated over her sufferings. Emory did not succeed in conquering her, but he did succeed in souring her disposition, and killing every noble, generous feeling which she had possessed before she knew him. He *did* succeed in rendering her distrustful, hypocritical, savage and untameable. He did succeed in making her the most implacable enemy he had in the world, and more dangerous than all the rest combined.

Kate O'Donnell, too, had changed with Estelle. They were never seen together, but they often met and talked long and earnestly when nobody was aware of the fact. They made

common cause against a common enemy. Kate hated Emory with a bitter, lasting hatred, and her wild, uncultivated nature—although it had once possessed the ingredients of humanity and good feeling—was easily changed by Estelle's master spirit into the nature of a demon.

Such was the state of things when Estelle became the mother of a boy, an event which gave Emory the most complete satisfaction, inasmuch as it was another chain upon the limbs of his already overloaded captive—another subject of splenetic remark and biting inuendo. His triumph in view of the new accession to his family, however, was shortlived, for Estelle had but fairly recovered from the sickness consequent upon the birth of her child, when she suddenly, together with her infant, and the servant Kate O'Donnell, disappeared. They took with them between two and three thousand dollars in bank notes, and left behind them something of a far different nature, for in the week following, while Emory (who left immediately) was in New York searching for some trace of the fugitives, Fanny Grant was fatally poisoned by a glass of wine which she had procured from a private bottle belonging to Emory.

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CHAPTER XVI.

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WE must now return to Helen Wallace, whom we left with her aunt. The joy of the young girl when she found herself safely beneath the roof of her kind relative, surrounded by friends, and secure from the pursuit of her diabolical enemies, was beyond the power of expression, and showed itself in the most extravagant acts of endearment. She wept and laughed together, and for some moments she did nothing but embrace first her aunt and then her two cousins, while Jack Ainslie, the policeman, stood looking on with solid satisfaction depicted upon his good-natured and good-looking countenance.

The day following her happy escape, she wrote to her mother giving the full particulars of her unhappy adventure, and after spending a couple of weeks with her aunt, she went home under the care of Jack Ainslie.

She kept up a constant correspondence with her cousin Mary after this, but more than a year passed away before she again visited New York, which she did on the very day that Estelle absconded from her husband.

It was a happy re-union when Helen again found herself beneath her kind aunt's roof, surrounded by her two cousins and Jack Ainslie, whose presence called up the circumstances of her first meeting with him more than a year previously, and the conversation naturally turned upon that subject. As the

recollection of the horrors from which she had escaped came vividly up in Helen's mind, she could not help kissing her aunt and her cousin Mary as she alluded to the joyful sensations which filled her when she entered their dwelling on that dreadful night.

'I think, Miss Wallace,' said Jack, after he had enjoyed the scene for a while without speaking, 'you might as well serve us all alike—I'm as glad you made your escape from the place you was in as anybody, and though I ain't exactly your cousin yet, there's no knowing how soon I may be,' and he glanced mischievously at Mary Gardener.

'O, sir,' exclaimed Helen, in reply to his good-natured remark, when she could so far command her feelings as to speak without hesitancy—'I shall never cease to remember your kindness to me. I know I can never repay you except with gratitude, but my heart is full of that I do assure you. O, what would have become of me, had you not arrived so opportunely to rescue me.'

'Why, you'd have been taken to the Station House and kept there all night, I s'pose,' answered Jack, 'and in the morning you'd have been taken with other prisoners before the Justice. Maybe your story'd have been b'lieved and maybe it wouldn't, but anyway you'd have been put in charge of the matron and your mother telegraphed to.'

'Yes, and then,' exclaimed Helen, her tears starting afresh at the idea of such a thing, 'it would have broken her heart to hear of me from such a place.'

'Well, never mind,' said Jack, consolingly, 'the danger is over now, and there's no use crying about it. I'm only sorry I've never been able to get any trace of the beasts that tried to ruin you, so that I might bring 'em to justice.'

'O, never mind,' said Helen, in a melancholy tone, 'let them go. They may, perhaps, have repented of their wickedness and learned to do better, and if they have not, they will cer-

tainly not escape punishment hereafter, for God's judgments are certain. As for myself I freely forgive them for the injury they have done me, and I hope it was their last act of the kind.'

'Well,' said Jack, holding up both hands in astonishment, 'you *are* green! Why, do you s'pose sich animals as they are ever thinks of repentance or learnin' to do better? Not a bit of it. It's the Astor House to a rap over the head that they swore and cursed terribly, because you got clear of 'em, and begun right away layin' new plans to catch somebody else. I tell you what it is, you poor, innocent little thing, you've got no more idea of their bad p'int's than they have of your good ones. I'm obliged to make arrests sometimes which makes me feel very bad. I don't like to take a feller in for stealin' a loaf of bread, or a ham, or anything of that kind, especially if he's got a pale wife and a lot of little children who look as if they was hungry, and my heart fairly bleeds when I am called onto to arrest the bad son of some good but too indulgent mother, but when a case like this 'ere of yours comes along, you don't know how much good it does me to see the key turned onto the rotten-hearted old brutes, and to hear afterwards that they'm safely lodged in the State Prison, and doin' the State good service—though this ain't often the case, for they've got too much money for justice to buck agin.'

'Don't you think,' asked Helen, as she looked calmly into Jack's indignant face, 'that if, instead of sending such poor creatures as Mr. and Mrs. Waffles to prison and treating them harshly, the authorities would provide some place where they might have good instruction, and be taught through kindness to realize their dreadful wickedness, it would have the effect of reforming them.'

'I don't think nothing about it,' answered Jack, 'I *know* it wouldn't. Charity is throwed away onto sich beasts as them. In all my experience I never yet saw one of 'em show the least feelin'. I have seen murderers and highwaymen, and

burglars cry like babies afore now, when their heart was appealed to, but I've never seen one of the traffickers in human souls like them wot had a holt o' you shed a tear in my life, unless it was from rage or disappointment. Talk about bringin' 'em to realize their wickedness! Why, don't you s'pose they know exactly how bad they are? Of course they do, and it's a kind of a luxury for 'em to think of it. They're only happy when they're doin' some work for the devil, and if you take away their power to do harm, you take away the chief pleasure of their lives. Why, p'raps you won't b'lieve it, but it's jest as true as you stand there, this 'ere class of criminals is always the first to die in the State Prison, and the reason is, not because they are less able to stand the discipline than any others, but because it breaks their hearts to think that they can't ruin any more souls.'

'Well, let's change the conversation,' interposed Mary Gardener, good-naturedly: 'I don't think, John, you could change Helen's views of human nature if you should talk all day, and furthermore, I don't think you ought to, if you could, for certainly, a belief in the total depravity of a portion of our fellow creatures, is not calculated to add to the happiness of the person who entertains that belief.'

'Who said anything about the total depravity of our fellow creatures, Molly?' said Jack, turning to Mary Gardener, and playfully chucking her under the chin; 'I wasn't talking of the depravity of our fellow creatures, but only of the depravity of sich beasts as Mr. and Mrs. Waffles; and if you think that they belong to the human family because they've got the human shape, you're mistaken. It's my opinion that beasts have souls as well as human beings, and that when they die their souls wander around in the air till they find the right kind of a breast to lodge into, when they at once take full possession of it till Death drives them out agin. This is kind 'er turning the transmigration doctrine upside down, but it looks reasonable to me, and I've got no doubt that Mr. and Mrs.

Waffles, if they'm alive, are a couple of hyenas, and very bad shaped ones at that.'

'Well, well,' replied Mary, 'never mind them—let them rest for the present, and let us talk of something else;' then turning to her cousin she continued, 'how long are you going to stay with us, Helen?'

'I don't know,' replied the young girl; 'that will depend entirely upon mother. She didn't tell me how long I could stay, but said she'd write for me when she wanted me to come home.'

'O, I hope she won't take you away from us right off, because when you was here before you was unfortunate enough to fall into the hands of a couple of such outrageous ——'

'Hyenas,' suggested Jack Ainslie.

'Creatures,' continued Mary, without noticing the interruption—'I want you to stay here a few weeks at least. You will be such company for me. I have very few young lady acquaintances, and for lack of other amusement I am forced the best part of my time to listen to the nonsensical gabble of Jack here, who knows nothing whatever of subjects which most interest me,' and she threw a sidelong mischievous glance at her lover.

'Ah, yes,' said Jack, emphatically, 'all right; then I s'pose I needn't finish that story I commenced telling you last night, about the young woman who was arrested dressed up in men's clothes, who had travelled all the way from Scotland here in search of her lover. I commenced to tell you of her adventures—how she was wrecked, and how she was picked up while clinging to a spar, by some fishermen—how she afterwards shipped again, and was forced to turn pirate. There's where I left off, and I s'pose you don't want me to finish it?'

'Why, yes,' answered Mary, 'you did get me interested in that, to be sure, and I should like to know how it turned out. How was it? Did she get any trace of her fugitive lover?'

‘O, it is such nonsensical gabble,’ said Jack, provokingly, ‘I don’t see how you can bear to listen to it.’

‘What a tease you are, Jack,’ cried Mary, with a pout.

‘Yes, I can’t help it,’ answered Jack; ‘I’m so ignorant of the subjects which interest you.’

‘Come, come, Johnny,’ remarked Mrs. Gardener, who, for some time, had taken no part in the conversation, ‘you have interested me, as well as Mary, and I have not accused you of dullness; so I wish you would gratify me by finishing the story. Besides, Helen, I dare say, would like to hear it.’

‘O, of all things!’ exclaimed Helen, ‘do tell it!’

‘Well, then,’ said Jack, clearing his throat for a commencement, ‘I will. You see, she was brought into the station-house, one night, about 12 o’clock’——

He was interrupted by a ring at the door bell, and a minute afterwards, Minnie Jay, an acquaintance of Mary Gardener’s, entered the apartment. She was a bright eyed, rosy-cheeked, light-hearted working girl, a tailoress, over whose joyous head, about eighteen summers had passed, and who had never known what grief was, save when occasionally her position in life had subjected her to the insults of that despicable class of men who imagine that because a girl is forced to work for a livelihood, she must, of necessity, be somewhat loose in her morals. She was a merry little creature, full of life and good nature, and a great favorite with Mary, who advanced towards her the moment she entered, and cordially shaking hands with, and kissing her, exclaimed—

‘Why, Minnie, I’m rejoiced to see you looking so well, after your late illness. Have you entirely recovered?’

‘Yes,’ was the answer, in a clear, musical voice, ‘I am never ailing long at one time, and I never felt better in my life than at present. Do you know how I took that last heavy cold I had?’

‘No, I don’t know that I do,’ replied Mary.

‘Then I’ll tell you,’ was the frank reply; ‘by wearing

paper-soled shoes, and getting my feet wet. Father told me it would be so; but what he said went in at one ear and out at the other, till I found myself down sick, and then I determined to be more careful in future. Now, look there,' she continued, resting an exquisitely shaped little foot upon the cross-piece of a chair, and displaying a stout pair of calf-skin shoes, 'that's the kind of foot-covering I intend to wear hereafter, when it threatens rain, as it does at present.'

'And very wise in you, too,' exclaimed Jack Ainslie; 'I do believe that one-half the sickness young girls have comes from some imprudence in dressing, and I'm glad to see there's one who isn't afraid to go contrary to the ideas of *Mrs. Fashion*.

'O, yes,' exclaimed Mary, affecting a tone of disdain, 'these men are always preaching about women killing themselves by following the fashion. It's a pity they don't alter some of their own fashions, for goodness knows there's need of it!'

'Now you shan't scold Mr. Ainslie for giving his opinion,' cried Minnie, in a merry tone, 'for he's right. There's no doubt but what it would benefit the men vastly to drop some of their bad habits; still two wrongs don't make a right, and I'm for waging war against the errors of female dress. I've some idea of starting an 'Anti-Light-Gaiter-and-Tight-Lacing Society,' and if I thought I should meet with sufficient support, I'd do it; but, psha! there isn't a girl in New York, hardly, who wouldn't have some severe remark to make about me if I should undertake it.'

'Gracious me!' exclaimed Mary, suddenly, 'why, what a forgetful, careless creature I am! Here I've been talking all this time, and haven't introduced my cousin Helen; better late than never, though. Miss Jay, this is Miss Wallace.'

'I have often heard you speak of her,' said Minnie, advancing towards Helen, and gently shaking her by the hand, 'and I am happy to make her acquaintance.'

Helen acknowledged the compliment by a slight inclination

of her head; and the ceremony of introduction being over, the whole party were soon conversing familiarly.

‘Dear me!’ exclaimed Mary, during a short pause in the conversation, ‘I forgot all about the young lady in male attire! John was about telling us a beautiful story just as you entered, Minnie.’

‘Then let him go on with it, by all means,’ exclaimed Minnie, ‘for, if there’s anything I’m fond of, it is an exciting story.’

‘Very sorry,’ ladies, that I can’t oblige you at present,’ said Jack Ainslie, reaching his hat, and preparing to start off—‘the fact is, it’s time I was on duty—some other day I’ll be happy to accommodate you, but business before pleasure, you know.’

‘O, yes, that’s always the way!’ said Mary Gardener, pettishly, ‘you’re never in a hurry till a favor is asked of you, and then it’s ‘business before pleasure!’’

‘That isn’t so, is it, Molly?’ said Jack, coaxingly, as he twirled one of her bright ringlets around his fingers—‘you don’t mean that, I know you don’t. Come, don’t be angry, that’s a good girl,’ and after a little more coaxing on the part of Jack and a little more pouting on the part of Mary, the former disappeared, followed by the latter, and just as the street-door closed upon the policeman’s retreating form, Minnie Jay declared she heard something very like a kiss reverberate through the entry. Mary wouldn’t own it, of course, but Minnie insisted that she could not be mistaken in the sound, and as she had passed through all the phases of courtship and was engaged at the time to be married, there cannot be a doubt that she was right.

‘Now,’ said Minnie, after Jack Ainslie had departed, ‘I must be going, too, for I’m hurried to death with work, and merely ran up to invite you to our house next Monday night week—just two weeks from to-day. I shall be eighteen years old, if I live to see it, and I intend to have a little company;

but I wouldn't take a bit of pleasure if you wasn't there—will you come ?'

'I will try to,' replied Mary.

'And will you bring your cousin with you?' interrogated Minnie, 'I hope you will come, won't you, Miss Wallace?' she continued, turning to Helen.

'I don't know that I shall be in the city,' replied Helen, 'but if I am, nothing would give me more pleasure.'

'O, do try to stay,' said Minnie, 'I think you would be pleased with our folks. Father is full of fun, old as he is, and mother is never happy unless when concocting some joke. Besides, there will be some young men there. Such nice young fellow! One in particular, who wants me to introduce him to some young lady, and I know you'll just suit him.'

'I am not vain enough to suppose,' replied Helen, modestly, 'that I have any attractions for a city beau, but even if I had, and should suit the gentleman you allude to, it is not so certain that he would suit me, for I am somewhat particular. However, I am sure I would be delighted with the old folks, and if I do not have to go home before your birthday arrives I shall be very happy to take part in celebrating it.'

'Thank you,' said Minnie, cordially, 'I shall expect you, but if I am disappointed, I must put up with it. Good bye! good-bye, Mary—good-bye, Mrs. Gardener!' and the merry-hearted girl departed.

## CHAPTER XVII.

A FORTNIGHT rolled rapidly by, and as no summons had arrived from Helen's mother, the young girl, as she had promised, accompanied her cousins and Jack Ainslie to the house of Minnie Jay, early on the evening of that young lady's birth-day.

Minnie had not over-praised her parents when speaking of them to Helen, who found them all that she had represented them to be—a jovial, fond, entertaining old couple, who thought the world of their daughter, and were only too anxious to render every body happy who honored her natal anniversary with their presence. The young country girl naturally had great veneration for old people, and was fond of their society, especially when they were of a lively turn, and took pains to please her, but she was not over-fond of mingling in mixed assemblages, nor could she boast much experience in fashionable life. It was with a feeling of reluctance, therefore, that after tea, she accompanied Minnie Jay and her cousins to the drawing room, where a number of young ladies and gentlemen had already assembled. Once there, however, she made herself sociable, and indulged freely in the general conversation. She was a girl of an original and very fine mind, and although she had not been liberally

educated, yet she had read much, and was able to converse fluently upon almost any subject that might be started, which fact did not long remain a secret, and she was soon the centre of an admiring circle composed of both sexes. Although belonging to what is called the poorer class of society, Mr. and Mrs. Jay had once been in very comfortable circumstances, and although they were forced to allow their daughter to work for a living, they had considerable pride, and felt when they looked at her, that she was fit to be the bride of the most aristocratic. To tell the truth, Minnie herself felt so—and not without reason, for among those who honored her with a visit occasionally were a number of young men of some pretensions, both as to wealth and breeding. Some of these sat around Helen while she conversed, and although they could not lose sight of the fact that she was a portionless girl, they had to acknowledge to themselves that she was a particularly bright one.

Everything passed off pleasantly to Helen till about ten o'clock, when she saw Minnie beckoning to her from the other side of the room. She arose and went to her, when the latter whispered—

‘*He* has come!’

‘Who has come?’ asked Helen, with some surprise.

‘Why, Mr. Barker,’ replied Minnie, ‘the young gentleman I told you I wished to introduce to you.’

‘I had much rather,’ said Helen, ‘you would not give me a direct introduction to any one. It is enough that I am generally known by the company.’

‘Nonsense!’ exclaimed Minnie, ‘you are altogether too modest; you will surely die an old maid unless you get rid of some of your queer notions.’

‘I expect to,’ said Helen, with a smile, and she was about resuming the seat which she had left, when the door near which they stood opened, and the individual of whom Minnie had been talking entered.

Helen cast her eyes upon the carpet, and, at the same time, the mischievous Minnie beckoned to the newly arrived guest, and, as he approached her, she said—

‘Miss Wallace, allow me to introduce to you Mr. Barker.’

Helen raised her eyes to acknowledge the introduction, when they fell full upon the face of Bob Barker, whom she had before seen as the patron of the infamous Mrs. Waffles. She recognized him instantly, although he looked very different from what he did on the occasion just referred to. He was perfectly sober, the style of his dress was less flashy, and, in short, he looked more like a gentleman than he did at that time. The introduction was so sudden that Helen came near uttering a cry of affright, but she checked herself, although every drop of blood in her body seemed to have found its way into her face, and then as suddenly retreated, leaving her as cold and pale as sculptured marble, and trembling violently. She spoke not a word, but turned abruptly from him, and sought a seat by the side of her cousin.

Her conduct surprised Minnie as much as it did Bob, who thought it exceedingly strange, and remarked after she had left them—

‘I wonder what can be the matter, Miss Jay. There isn’t anything particularly frightful in my appearance this evening, is there? Or is the young lady taken suddenly ill?’

‘O no,’ replied Minnie, ‘you look well enough, but the fact is, Miss Wallace, although willing enough to converse when once the ice is broken, is rather diffident at first. She only needs a skilful talker like yourself to draw her out, after which you will not find her backward, I assure you.’

‘If that is really the case,’ replied Bob, ‘she shall not complain that I did not furnish her with material for conversation, for I will ply her with questions which, if she does not answer from choice, common politeness will force her to reply to,—and, as he finished speaking, he took a seat by her side.’

Minnie Jay knew nothing of the moral character of Robert Barker, or she would have been less familiar with him herself, as well as less anxious to introduce him to a friend. She only knew him as a gay, thoughtless young man of the world, whose father was quite wealthy, and whose society was rather agreeable than otherwise. She expected his acquaintance with Helen would end upon that evening, and her desire to introduce him arose more from a freak than anything else.

Helen was satisfied in her own mind that Minnie was in ignorance as to the true character of Barker, and therefore she did not blame her for introducing him, but she heartily wished herself at home, and away from his presence, and a feeling of sickness came over her as he seated himself at her side, and commenced a conversation.

She had made up her mind to treat him at first with apathetic indifference, and if she could not chill him into silence, she then determined to resort to actual rudeness—but Robert Barker was really, when himself, a fine-looking young fellow, and, moreover, possessed many good qualities—bad associations had injured, but not totally corrupted him, and, when in decent society, he not only knew how to conduct himself, but he felt in all its force the superiority of virtue over vice. He was not singular in this respect, for—alas, that the truth should have to be spoken—there are a great many Robert Barkers in the world—more, in fact, than honest people who mind their own business have any idea of.

‘Are you ill, Miss Wallace?’ he inquired, in a tone of concern, and in a voice of so much sweetness as to almost make Helen for the moment forget why she disliked him. She made him no answer, however, and, after a moment of silence, he again ventured to say, ‘I see that you are not well—I will say as much to Miss Jay,’ and he was about rising, when she replied, after a hard struggle with her feelings—

‘I beg you will not trouble yourself on my account, sir—I

fear that Miss Jay could render me but little assistance while you remain near me.'

Bob was thunderstruck at this reply, and could not for the life of him think what meaning to take from it. He was certain he had been guilty of no action to which the most fastidious stickler for etiquette could take exceptions, and for an instant he was almost inclined to doubt the sanity of the lady to whom he was talking. When his surprise had somewhat abated, he managed to observe—

'I scarcely know what to make of the remark just uttered by you, Miss Wallace—am I to understand that my presence is disagreeable to you, even to sickness?'

'Yes, sir,' she replied, but it was a hard task for her at say it—'that is just exactly what I wish you to understand.'

The blood mounted to Barker's cheeks, and an angry expression was upon his lips, but he checked it, and said in a quiet, gentlemanly tone—

'By some means I have been—though I do assure you, my dear young lady, most unintentionally so—the cause of annoyance to you, and I sincerely regret it, but I think I may be allowed to ask in all courtesy and without infringing any law of good breeding, in what that annoyance consists. I trust you will answer this interrogatory in all candor, and in the spirit in which it is put, for your reply may, perhaps, keep me from offending in a like manner upon some future occasion.'

Had Robert Barker given expression to the hasty words which first arose to his lips, Helen would have had no difficulty in choosing what course to pursue. She would have got up and left him at once. But when he acted so much the part of a gentleman, she could not find it in her heart to carry out her first resolution. She therefore replied—

'You ask no more than what is fair, sir, and I suppose I am bound to reply. I will do so, but not now. You shall

hear from me again, but at present suffice it to say that I have seen you before to-night, and under very different circumstances. I wish you a very good evening, sir,' and whispering to her cousins, (who had been closely engaged in conversation themselves, and had not heard anything which passed between Bob and herself,) her wish to retire, they sought out Minnie, and in spite of her strenuous endeavors to keep them longer, they shortly afterwards departed for home.

Bob Barker was intensely surprised as well as greatly annoyed at the singular result of his *tete-a-tete* with Helen, and would have given considerable to have had the riddle solved. He was certain he had never seen the young lady before, and to tell the truth, he was greatly taken with her, notwithstanding she had treated him so cavalierly. He had never met with a girl in his life whose appearance so fascinated him, and at the same time inspired him with so much respect. After she had departed, it seemed to him as though all the beauty in the room had fled, and when he had endeavored, but all in vain, to arrive at some conclusion concerning her in his own mind, he appealed to Minnie Jay to know something of her history. All that Minnie could tell him, however, was that she was a young lady on a visit from the country—that she had never been in the city but once before in her life, and then only for a short time, and that she was likely to remain but a short time then.

This account only served to render the matter more obscure than ever, and after an evening of the most restless anxiety, Robert Barker went home to dream of his mysterious enchantress.

The clock struck twelve just as Helen and her cousins, together with Jack Ainslie, reached home, and as Thomas Gardener was about inserting his latch key in the key-hole of the street door, a dark object resting in the shadow of the porch attracted his observation, and stooping to ascertain what it

was, he picked up a basket, containing something neatly covered with a dark-colored quilt.

‘Hello! what’s this?’ he exclaimed, as he displayed it to view.

‘I’ll bet it’s a baby!’ cried Jack, who had often been called upon to carry such little unfortunates to the Alms House;—and scarcely had he ventured the suggestion, when a feeble wail from underneath the coverlid gave unmistakeable evidence that he was right.

‘Let’s take it in and see what it looks like,’ said Thomas Gardener, and placing the basket carefully upon his arm, the whole party entered the house, and with the aid of a bright light proceeded to examine their prize.

‘Dear, dear! what a beautiful little creature!’ exclaimed Mrs. Gardener, who was the first to remove the covering from the babe—‘why I declare it’s wide awake!’

‘So it is!’ chimed in Mary, ‘and what great bright eyes it has! O, mother, let me take it,’ and as she spoke she raised it from the basket, and began chiruping to it.

‘That’s no poor person’s baby,’ remarked Jack Ainslie, whose critical eyes had at once caught sight of the trinkets which adorned its arms—‘see how splendidly it’s dressed!’

And then commenced a kissing time, such as we fear is seldom witnessed in the nurseries of the rich. The girls did not stop to examine its dress. It mattered little to them whether it was the offspring of rich or poor parents. It was a baby—a pretty one, too—and that was enough for them to know. Mary kissed it again and again—then it was taken from her by Helen, who in her turn caressed it fondly—then it again fell into the hands of Mrs. Gardener, who made as much of it as though it were her own—and lastly the youth Thomas took it, but being rather clumsy in handling such subjects, he caused it to cry out with pain, and instantly there was a chorus of sympathetic “O-o-o-’s!” from the women folks which caused the incautious boy to regret that he had

been imprudent enough to meddle with such dangerous property.

While this was being enacted, Jack Ainslie, who for the moment had lost sight of the baby in his love for his profession, was searching the basket; and just as the infant began to cry, he exclaimed—

‘Hello! what’s this? Here’s a note and a package. Let’s see what the note says!’ and unfolding it he read as follows:

“MRS. GARDENER—*Dear Madam*:—The person who leaves this child at your door is not unacquainted with you, although you have doubtless lost all recollection of her. She knows you to be a kind and affectionate woman, and is certain you will take good care of it. You need not be ashamed to take charge of it, for it was born in wedlock, and some day perhaps you may learn its history. At present if you wish to keep it from the grasp of a villain, please make no enquiry concerning it, but if you can, remove it at once from the city, and place it under the protection of some one in whom you have confidence in the country. In the package accompanying the basket you will find three hundred dollars in bank notes, and when this is exhausted you will receive more. The child’s name is Rudolph Graham, and at a future time, when circumstances will permit, it may be claimed by its mother,

“JULIA GRAHAM.”

Here was a mystery which puzzled the honest Mrs. Gardener not a little. Who *could* the mother of the child be? She had never known any Julia Graham, or any Julia at all for that matter, although she concluded, on a second thought, that the name was an assumed one, and after some time spent in useless imaginings, she determined to comply with the wishes expressed in the note, and it was finally agreed that Helen should take the babe home with her when she departed.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

ON the day succeeding the events just detailed, George Cantwell and Sam Slocumb sat in one of the private boxes of a well-known Broadway restaurant indulging in fried oysters and champagne, and at the same time carrying on, in an undertone, a conversation of a very interesting character.

‘I don’t give you this information for money alone,’ said Cantwell, as he sat down a glass which he had just emptied, ‘if that was my dodge I could make more out of Emory himself, for he’d come down liberally to know where they are—but that’s just the reason I won’t tell him. I hate him, and will lose no chance of injuring him, when I can do so with safety. Money is a necessity and is very acceptable at all times, but revenge is a luxury which I cannot often enjoy, and therefore it is doubly precious to me when I do obtain a slice of it.’

‘Did you not say,’ remarked Sam, ‘that her elder sister was poisoned?’

‘Yes,’ replied Cantwell, ‘but not purposely—the dose was not intended for her, but for Emory, though he, from some motive of his own, kept that fact concealed, and testified upon the inquest that he himself had poisoned the wine—that he had prepared it for some chemical purpose. The jury believed his story, and rendered a verdict of accidental poisoning, but

I am certain the dose was fixed for him, although it would be impossible for me to prove it. But when was ever a truth developed, if he wished it kept secret, and when was it ever kept secret if he wished it known? Curse him! O, if I could but once get him in my power, how I would make him groan!

‘What led you to suppose that they intended to abscond?’ enquired Slocumb.

‘When it is my interest to be wide awake,’ answered Cantwell, ‘I generally have my eyes and ears continually about me. I noticed on a number of occasions, when business called me to —, that Emory’s wife and the servant girl were absent at the same time. No one else seemed to observe the fact, and I don’t know that I should have paid any particular attention to it, if I had not once or twice caught them coming together from Kate’s room. This led me to suppose, however, that they had gone there to talk over some matter of a private nature, and in the morning of the night on which they escaped I was fortunate enough to catch sight of them just as they entered the apartment alluded to, and made bold to post myself at the door and listen. I did not overhear all which they had to say, but I heard enough to satisfy me that they intended to take their departure that night, so I watched them, followed them to the city, and traced them to the house where they are at present stopping. I was certain you would give considerable to know where Estelle was (why I was thus certain I will not tell you) and I have found you out, given you the information, and you must make the most of it.’

‘Do you think I will have much difficulty in moulding her to my wishes?’ asked Slocumb, anxiously.

‘I don’t know,’ replied Cantwell, ‘she’s a queer piece, and you may have trouble with her. I don’t believe you could do anything with her by coaxing, for she has become so used to the snarling of her husband, that I dare say she’ll feel lost without it. You may frighten her into some concession. Threaten her and the girl both with an arrest on a charge of

murder. I think there is no doubt but what this will fetch her. At all events I can do no more for you, and you must trust to your own wit for the rest.'

'I will follow her to the end of the world, but what I will accomplish my ends!' exclaimed Slocumb, determinedly, 'it will be such a triumph! such an achievement to boast of to Bob Barker! He laughed at me when I ventured to predict it—now let's see if I can't laugh at him!'

'It will be as much my triumph as yours,' said Cantwell, gleefully, 'for if you can succeed in making her your mistress, I shall be the first one to convey the intelligence to Emory, and O, how it will wring his proud heart! Not that he loves her, at all, but then she is his *wife*, and there's where the shoe will pinch. I know him—every point about him—I could drive him crazy by carrying to him such a piece of information, and detailing it as I can detail it!'

'Here's that we may both be successful!' said Slocumb, as he raised a glass of wine to his lips, and drained it to the bottom, 'and now I will set about my conquest at once.' He rang the bell as he spoke, and the waiter appearing, he settled the bill, and he and Cantwell sallied forth.

'Here we part,' said the latter when they reached the sidewalk, 'and if you should not see me again in the course of a day or two you will drop me a line, will you, and let me know how you get on?'

'By all means,' answered Slocumb, and they parted, each taking a different direction.

Slocumb's course lay up Broadway, and as he walked leisurely along, maturing his plans and thinking over the surprise which he would give his friend Bob Barker after he had completed his conquest, who should he meet but that identical individual, who with careworn countenance and downcast eyes was plodding moodily along.

'Ah, Bob!' exclaimed Sam, as he extended his hand, 'glad to see you! But grave-stones and empty brain-pans! how

down in the mouth you look! Why, what's the matter with you, old boy? Come and take a cocktail, just to wake yourself up a bit.'

'No, I'm obliged to you, Sam,' was the reply of the youth, in a sad tone of voice, 'but I'd rather be excused.'

'Well, there!' cried Sam, affecting surprise, 'I never knew you to refuse a drink before! what's going to happen!'

'I don't think I shall drink as much hereafter as I've been in the habit of drinking,' said Bob, in the same melancholy tone which he had before used.

'Why, what *has* come over you, old fellow?' cried Sam, at the same time slapping his companion familiarly upon the shoulder, 'you hav'n't been to class-meeting, have you?'

'No,' was the reply, 'but I've been thinking seriously lately, that ——'

'Psha!' cried Sam, 'where's the use in thinking seriously? Just come in with me and take a drink, and I'll tell you all about a grass widow I'm going to chase up.'

'I don't wish to hear it,' replied Robert Barker, decisively, 'I've paid too much attention to such subjects already, and to tell you the truth, Sam, my views of propriety have changed immensely within the last forty-eight hours!'

'Ha! ha!' laughed Slocumb, 'you ain't going to turn parson, are you?'

'I might embrace a more objectionable calling,' replied Bob, 'but I do not expect to take out clerical orders, nor is it my intention to preach a sermon on the present occasion. I only wish to say that my views concerning certain matters have totally changed, and that unless you alter as I have done, henceforth we are no fit companions for each other.'

Sam was so utterly astonished that he looked sharply at his friend, in the hope of discovering some sign of merriment in his countenance. He saw none, however, so he asked, with mock gravity—

‘And may I be allowed to enquire what miracle has wrought this important change in your character in so short a time?’

‘Yes,’ replied Bob, ‘and I will tell you. After I have done so, I know you will laugh at me, but it is my desire that you should know what has caused me to alter, for the knowledge may possibly prove of service to you hereafter. The miracle, then, which I trust has worked a reformation in me, is a *virtuous girl*.’

‘Ha! ha! ha!’ again gleefully shouted Slocumb, ‘that is a *miracle* indeed! Well, I wish you joy of your regeneration, and I’m sorry I ain’t a fit subject for the same process—but I ain’t—and so if you won’t take a drink I must bid you good morning, for pleasure calls and I must obey.’

‘Good morning, then,’ was the sorrowful reply of Bob, as he re-commenced his walk, and an Eighth Avenue stage happening to pass at the time, Slocumb beckoned to the driver, jumped in, and as he took his seat he muttered to himself—

‘Well, he’s a fit subject for the Lunatic Asylum—*he is!* The idea of a young fellow allowing any woman to gain such an influence as that over him! Preposterous!’

When the stage had got pretty well up the Eighth Avenue, Slocumb pulled the string and got out. He then took a small slip of paper from his pocket, and looking at it, he said to himself, ‘If the direction’s the right one, the house must be somewhere in this neighborhood.’ While he was looking around, a woman came out of a grocery store near at hand, and passed rapidly by him. She held her head down, and a large hood nearly concealed her features from view, but Sam easily recognised from her peculiar gait, the person of Kate O’Donnell. Stepping off quickly in pursuit, he caught up with her, and touching her upon the shoulder, he remarked—

‘I suppose you thought you had fooled me nicely, didn’t you, Kate? For the last three months I have been feeling you liberally in —, to keep me posted up in family affairs there, and the first thing I hear is that your lovely mistress

and yourself have taken French leave, and located yourselves here in New York. That wasn't hardly honest, my Celtic beauty. You should at least have given me a hint as to how the cat was about to jump.'

Kate was taken all aback at the sudden appearance of Slocumb, whom she had indeed swindled extensively by keeping him entirely in the dark, and at the same time taking his money for information which she manufactured to suit. At first she was about to run away from him, but noticing that he kept a close watch upon her, she altered her mind, and inquired, with an air of innocence—

'Who tould ye the misthress was in New York?'

'Come, come, Kate,' said Slocumb, somewhat impatiently, 'it's useless for you to try to pull the wool over my eyes—you've fooled me once, and that was my misfortune, but if you do it again it will be my fault. I know Mrs. Emory is here—that she lives on this street, and that you are living with her. I had my information from a direct source, and there can be no mistake about it.'

'A direct source, is it?' said Kate, when she saw concealment was longer useless, 'thin it must have bin from the divil you had it, for sorra a mortal saw us come away. But fhat d'ye want wid the misthress, anyhow?'

'I wish to see her,' was the laconic reply.

'Well, thin upon me word and credit,' said Kate, 'she doesn't wish to see you, I know. Sure, you niver had any acquaintance wid her.'

'I know it,' answered Slocumb, 'but I intend to have, so you may as well take me to the house, and announce me at once.'

'Well, thin, I'll not do it,' answered Kate, doggedly, 'for she doesn't want to see you,' and she was about passing along, when Slocumb caught her by the arm, and bending his head he whispered in her ear—

'I suppose she'd rather see me, bound on a mission of love,

than to see a policeman, bound on a mission of justice, wouldn't she ?'

'Hush-h-h !' said Kate, laying her finger upon her lip, 'come alone—I'll take you there, but you must let me go in first.'

'Very well,' answered Slocumb, 'but, mind, no tricks—I've followed the game up successfully, so far, and I won't lose it now without satisfaction—do you understand ?'

'I do !' said Kate, and she led the way to a neat two-story brick-house, closely followed by Slocumb.

She left Slocumb standing on the steps, and entered ; but had not been gone long when she returned, and conducted him up a flight of stairs, and into a neatly furnished parlor, where sat Estelle, pale as a corpse, and her face bearing evident traces of severe suffering. As soon as Kate had ushered him into the apartment she disappeared, and left him standing with his hat in his hand at a loss how to commence a conversation under such peculiar circumstances. Estelle waited a reasonable time, and as he did not open his lips, but stood gazing intensely upon her, she broke the silence by enquiring, in a voice weak from illness—

'Well, sir, my servant informed me a moment since, that you was anxious for an interview. To what am I indebted for the honor of this visit ?'

As soon as he heard her voice the embarrassment of Slocumb departed, and his natural impudence came to his relief, so drawing a chair up alongside of her, he replied, in a voice full of passion—

'To Love, Madam—to Love, you are indebted for this visit—Love, who occasionally causes his victims to forget what is due to propriety, etiquette—everything—which, I fear, you will think is the case in the present instance.'

'Why, sir,' replied Estelle, with apparent surprise, 'I do not recollect ever to have seen you before.'

‘No,’ answered Slocumb, endeavoring to take her hand, ‘but I have seen you. I saw you at the altar on the day of your marriage, and at that moment a passion took possession of me which has been consuming me ever since. By day and by night I have thought of you—never for a moment have you been absent from my imagination, and when I heard that you had fled from the roof of your legal tyrant, I determined, if possible, to seek you out, and lay my heart open before you. I have done so, and I now tremblingly await your reply.’

‘Our interview need not be a lengthy one, then,’ answered Estelle, ‘for this is my reply. I long since gave my affections to the only being for whom I can ever feel a particle of love. He slighted my love, it is true, but his conduct has not rendered it less ardent, although it can never meet with a return. After this confession, sir, I hope you will see the propriety of endeavoring to check the unhappy passion which has taken possession of you, and of leaving me to pursue my journey through life unmolested.’

‘That is impossible!’ cried Slocumb, ‘if you do not look with compassion upon me, death will be the result of your coldness. For twelve long, weary months, I have watched for, prayed for, this blissful moment, and now that the cup of happiness is at my lips, I cannot consent that it should be dashed ruthlessly aside. You can better school yourself to love me than I can school myself to forget my love.’

‘But you forget, sir,’ said Estelle, ‘that I am married and undivorced.’

‘A mockery! a mockery!’ cried Slocumb, energetically, ‘such a marriage is not recognised in the courts of love.’

‘And would not the relation of husband and wife between you and me amount to the same thing?’ said Estelle, ‘when I do not, and cannot love you?’

‘O, no,’ exclaimed Slocumb, with warmth, ‘for my feelings are better calculated to mingle harmoniously with yours, than

were those of the cold, formal, passionless Emory !' and as he finished the sentence, before she was aware of his intention he caught her around the neck and imprinted a libidinous kiss upon her lips.

A look of desperate rage gleamed in the black orbs of Estelle, as she tore herself from the embrace of the unprincipled youth, and cast upon him a look of withering scorn. Her heart had been swelling with indignation all along, but she repressed it, for she knew, from what Kate had said to her, that she was in his power, and she wished to get along with him as easily as possible—when, however, his conduct broke out into an act of rudeness, she could no longer command herself, and she exclaimed in a voice of fearful passion—

' Begone ! you mean, paltry villain. Leave this room instantly, or I will have you thrown from the window headlong !'

' *Will* you ?' exclaimed Slocumb, emphatically ; ' well, that would be imprudent to say the least, for if the fall did not happen to kill me, I might be able to tell a story which would look horrible in print. It is a terrible crime for one sister to poison another—and yet it is sometimes done, although the deed may be twisted by a coroner's jury into an accident, by the suppression of evidence. If I were able now, to put a witness on the stand who was willing to swear to having overheard a plot for the murder of a husband, it would be a fair inference that poison was prepared for him, though he might by accident have escaped it, and by accident also a sister may have drank it.

It was evident to Estelle that however Slocumb may have come in possession of it, he had a truer knowledge of the full extent of her guilt than she had supposed existed outside her own bosom or that of Kate O'Donnell, and she stood rooted to the floor, her lips slightly parted, her eyes staring wildly, and her breast heaving tumultuously, as she gazed upon him.

Tears at last came to her relief, and sinking into a chair, she exclaimed imploringly—

‘Oh, sir, have pity on me! I am a wretched, miserable creature, bowed to the dust by guilt, and shame, and sorrow—my punishment is great already—despair has driven me almost wild—let this suffice, and do not take advantage of the terrible secret which you possess to plunge me still further into the abyss of infamy and woe!’

‘I haven’t said anything about infamy and woe,’ replied Slocumb, while a smile of satisfaction played round the corners of his mouth, ‘I talked only of joy and happiness, upon which you are pleased to put a false face. Do as I wish you to, and you shall have no cause to regret it—refuse me, and you know the consequences. I can’t afford to lay out my time and money without some return.’

Estelle was calm again almost instantly, and an air of settled determination rested upon her features as she muttered to herself, ‘*I’ll do it!*’ Then turning to Slocumb, she said, with an effort at composure—

‘Perhaps I am foolish in regarding your suit in so serious a light, but it is at least a delicate matter, and I trust you will give me till to-night to think of it?’

‘Oh, by all means,’ answered Slocumb, scarcely able to contain himself for the joy that filled him—‘nothing can be fairer than that, and now that we understand each other, I will take my leave.’ He placed his hat upon his head and advanced towards the door. As he reached it, he turned again, and remarked—‘I don’t wish to appear too particular, but you must excuse me if I remark that it will be useless for you to attempt to escape between this time and evening, for I shall place a watch upon the house.’

‘Rest perfectly easy on that score,’ replied Estelle, ‘I will not attempt to escape. I have made up my mind to receive you here to-night, and I will do it—let it, if you please, be

about ten o'clock. I shall not be prepared for you before that hour.'

'As you please,' replied Slocumb, 'ten o'clock it is—so farewell till then.'

He departed, and as soon as the door had fairly closed upon him, a diabolical look settled upon the features of Estelle, and she rang the bell for Kate O'Donnell, who soon afterwards made her appearance.

'Is he comin' back agin the night?' asked Kate, looking steadily at her mistress.

'Yes, Kate,' answered Estelle, 'he is coming back to-night, and he will stay here too—not only to-night, but for many nights after—he will *never leave here alive*, Kate!' and her eyes sparkled with maniac wildness as she spoke.

'Is there no way to put him off?' asked Kate.

'None,' replied Estelle, 'he is a beast, Kate!—worse than a beast—he has no feeling—I implored his pity—I appealed to his generosity—but he had neither, and he shall die! He threatened to give us both up on a charge of murder!'

'Did he?' cried Kate, catching a portion of the rage which gleamed in the eyes of her mistress; 'then he ought to die, for sure no wan should be charged wid murdher for thryin' to take the life iv sich a baste as yer husband. It's glad society should be to get rid of him.'

'We must make a sure job of it this time,' said Estelle, savagely—'since we have embarked in the trade of murder, we should learn to do our business properly. How shall we kill him, Kate?' and the insane light which gleamed in her eyes, as she coolly asked the monstrous question, showed that her mind was temporarily unsettled.

'I don't know,' answered Kate, who seemed to be a mere machine, under the influence of Estelle—'wouldn't the pisin do?'

'That will do if we can't think of anything better,' answered Estelle, 'but I don't want to use it if I can help it—it isn't

so sure—besides it's a tell-tale—I want some safer means.' She thought for a moment, and then continued, 'Never mind, we have some hours to prepare for him, and I am determined he shall have a reception such as he deserves. In the mean time, Kate, get everything in readiness to start to-morrow. Our baggage is all on board, is it not?'

'It is,' answered Kate.

'Then complete whatever business is yet unfinished,' said Estelle, 'and leave me to study out a plan for the easy rest of my most honorable lover.'

Kate disappeared and went about her work, while Estelle, as soon as she was left alone, began pacing with hasty strides up and down the room.

'Why should I hesitate to do it,' she muttered—'he would dishonor me—nay, he would hang me, even—he possesses the power to do it, and I shall only be acting in self-defence. I'll do it—I'll do it—I'll do it!'

Again she sat down and attempted to compose herself. She found that impossible, however, and jumping up she flew down stairs, as though pursued by some desperate enemy, and spoke a few words to Kate—then she rushed back again, and approached a closet, and taking down a bottle and a wine glass she swallowed half-a-dozen glasses of wine in rapid succession. Again she wandered up and down in moody distraction, and all that long afternoon and evening, she moved restlessly about from room to room, like a guilty spirit seeking an escape from Tophet.

At length the city clocks told the hour of ten, and shortly afterwards a ring was heard at the door bell. A few hurried words in whispers passed between Estelle and Kate in the entry above, and then the latter proceeded to the door.

'Is it you, Mistor Slocumb?' she enquired in a whisper.

'Yes, yes!' was the impatient answer, 'open the door quickly, for it's beginning to rain like the devil.'

'I'm sorry I can't let ye in this way,' answered Kate, 'but

the lock iv the sthreet dure is out iv ordher, an' ye'll have to go up the next alley-way an' climb over the fince—meself'll be there, an' show you where to jump over.'

'Very well,' said Slocumb, 'if I must I suppose I must,' and following Kate's direction he took his way up the alley leading between the two houses. It was a dark night, and he had to grope his way to the fence, which he found easily, and as he reached it, Kate addressed him from the other side.

'Don't make more noise nor you can hilp,' she said, 'in climbin'. Here's the place—here jist, where I'm tappin' wid me fisht. There, that's right,' she continued, as his head appeared just above her—'now jump clear iv the fince, for they are jist afther paintin' it on this side, an' ye'll shpoil yer clothes.'

As she finished speaking, he jumped, but it was his last jump on earth, for instead of landing upon the solid ground, as was his expectation, an open cistern, just beneath the fence yawned to receive him, and in he went in eight feet of water, and without a straw to catch at. One sudden, desperate cry of agony escaped the poor wretch, and the next moment the cover of the cistern was closed, and he was left struggling in the treacherous element. It was a terrible death to die there in that dark, dismal, noisome place, and the guilty but unfortunate youth struggled desperately with the grim tyrant. A moment before he had been full of buoyant life, and was intent only upon the gratification of his unholy passions—now he was in the very jaws of death, and yet with all his senses perfectly acute. He knew that he was soon to appear before an offended Deity with all his imperfections on his head—that he must die in that stifling pest-hole where his body would bloat and rot before it would be found—if indeed it was ever found by his friends, who might never know of his unhappy fate. Horrible thought! He screamed in his agony till he was hoarse, but the dull echo of his own voice mocked him.

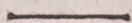
He dug his nails into the slimy, worm-eaten sides of the cistern till they were torn off at the roots. When his strength was almost exhausted, and he had no longer breath left to shout, the recollection of every wicked deed of which he had ever been guilty came rushing into his mind. A sweet face with mild blue eyes seemed to gaze tearfully upon him through the dense gloom above him, and immediately his conversation with Bob Barker but a few hours previously occurred to him. Poor Isabel! She, too, had died by drowning—she had

“Rashly importunate gone to her death,”

because he had betrayed her. Suddenly her countenance disappeared, and its place was supplied by a whole host of hideous, grinning faces which seemed to mock at his misery. Then the last feeble hold of his finger ends upon the rotten boards gave way—his strength totally deserted him, and as he essayed to give one last despairing shout for mercy to heaven, the water rushed into his mouth, and he sank to the bottom—again he arose, and again the water drove back the prayer which he would have uttered—then he lost his recollection, and finally sunk stark and cold to the bottom—a few bubbles arose above his corpse—then all was still and calm as before, and a guilty soul was with its maker.

The next morning Estelle, under the name of Julia Graham, and Kate O'Donnell, who assumed the name of Margaret Doyle, took passage for New Orleans.

## CHAPTER XIX.



ON the morning succeeding the party at Minnie Jay's, Robert Barker, who had been unable to sleep all night for thinking of the mysterious and painful circumstances which had occurred, took his way to the dwelling of the young lady just mentioned in the hope of hearing something which might tend to somewhat mitigate the awful suspense under which he was laboring.

It was about 11 o'clock when he reached the house, and what was his surprise and gratification, on being shown into the parlor of Minnie, to find the object of his anxious thoughts there before him. Helen Wallace was seated there, with her bonnet on, having but that moment arrived.

'Good morning, Miss Wallace!' was his cordial greeting.

She colored deeply and bowed stiffly in reply to the salutation, but said nothing.

'I am rejoiced to find you here,' he continued, 'inasmuch as I trust you will now remove the load of anxiety which has oppressed me since I parted from you last night.'

'I cannot say I partake of the pleasure which you say this meeting gives you,' replied Helen, 'I had hoped that I should not see you again, and if I had dreamed of meeting you here

this morning I should certainly have sent the letter which I intended for you, and not brought it myself. Since we have met, however, I will myself deliver it. Here it is'—she took from her bosom a letter which she handed him and then continued—'It contains all which it is necessary I should say, and now trusting that we may never again cross each other's path, I will wish you a very good morning!'

They were alone, for Minnie had left the room at the call of her mother, just as Robert Barker entered, and the young man, casting upon Helen a look of mingled pain and admiration, exclaimed—

'Let me beseech you, Miss Wallace, not to leave me thus. Let me hear from your own lips why I, who never knowingly injured you, have incurred your deep displeasure.'

'The letter will tell you that,' was the reply, 'you may learn it at your leisure after I am gone.'

'Yes,' answered Robert Barker, earnestly, 'but if this is not all a misapprehension, and you really have ground of complaint against me, I may have some defence to make—I may be able to offer something in extenuation of my conduct—the letter cannot hear *that*, and I shall be forced to suffer unjustly in your estimation—Miss Wallace,' he continued imploringly, 'you have set my heart upon the rack, and it is but simple justice which I ask at your hands. The meanest criminal has a right to a hearing before condemnation, and I ask no more.'

Helen paused, and after a moment of deep thought she replied—

'Though your argument might hold good in law, Mr. Barker, I fear that it will avail but little in this affair. However, as you desire it, perhaps it would be as well for me to hear what can possibly be urged in defence of such conduct as that of which you have, to my knowledge, been guilty, and in order fairly to get at the matter, let us suppose a case.

But before proceeding further I must exact from you a solemn promise that you will never report what passes between us.

‘I never will,’ replied Barker, fervently, ‘so help me heaven!’

‘Enough,’ answered Helen, ‘I will take your word,—and now let us suppose that an honorable, pure-minded woman, has been deprived by death of her only protector in life—the husband of her heart, whose bosom has pillowed her head, and whose strong arms and willing hands have shielded her against the assaults of bitter, crushing poverty—let us suppose that after his death she is forced to struggle with the cold, pitiless world, to support and bring up in the paths of rectitude and virtue an only daughter, whom she regards as the apple of her eye—the sole solace in her painful bereavement—the prop and stay of her old age—the darling idol whom she regards as next only to Deity—let us further suppose that a couple of lost beings who own no accountability to God, approach this sorrow-stricken widow in the garb of Christianity, and by a hypocritical show of piety work upon her unsuspecting nature, till they prevail upon her to allow the daughter so loved to accompany them to a city filled with crime and misery, where they promise to advance her in life, and fit her to occupy a more elevated station, so that she may by the exercises of her heart and mind free her mother from all poverty, and care, and trouble—suppose that instead of acting in good faith, they place the daughter when fairly in their power in a den of infamy too horrible to name, where they intend to make her the victim of some wealthy and soulless sensualist, who after having wrecked her soul and body, will send her headlong on the road to ruin, despair and death—what, tell me,’ said Helen, pausing for an instant, and fixing her brilliant, soul-lit eyes full upon the face of the man she was addressing, ‘what would *you* think, not only of the procurers in such a case, but of the man who employed them in the base business?’

‘I should think,’ answered Barker, in a tone of indignation,

‘that they were the vilest wretches the sun ever shone upon, and that the severest punishment the law could bestow, would be inadequate to their crime.’

‘And suppose,’ resumed Helen, ‘that pending the arrival of the base man who was to purchase the unfortunate and unsuspecting victim, another person of a like nature, though perhaps not so deeply dyed in sin, should step in and try to outbid the original purchaser—what would be your opinion of him?’

Instantly the conversation which Bob had taken part in at the house of Mrs. Waffles occurred to him, and the conviction forced itself upon his mind that it was to him Helen alluded, although he could not imagine where she had obtained her information. He strove to answer the last interrogatory which she had put to him, but he could not do so. He was not so bad a man as Helen evidently thought he was, and he wished to assure her of that fact, but he knew not how to do it, for he could not deny that he had persuaded the infamous panders to vice alluded to, to introduce him to a female beneath their roof, (although he knew not who she was or how she came there) and conscious guilt caused his tongue to cleave to the roof of his mouth, and rendered him dumb.

‘Man, man,’ cried Helen, raising her voice, and casting upon Barker a look which cut him to the soul, ‘your silence condemns you! Right well you know that I have been indulging in no fancy sketch—that all which I have stated actually did happen—but you are not aware of a fact which I am now about to impart, namely, that I, Helen Wallace, was the daughter of that grief-stricken widow—the prisoner in that den of sin whom you so much wished to see—but, thank Heaven, I escaped the toils that were set for me! He who always hears the orphan’s prayer, lent a pitying ear to my petition, and delivered me from the hands of my enemies! And now, farewell! I have given you the explanation you required, and I trust the recollection of this scene may make a lasting impres-

sion upon you, and cause you to leave the unrighteous path which you have hitherto trod. Seek forgiveness of God for the many sins which you have committed, and you may yet experience that sweet relief which an altered heart is sure to bring with it. For myself, I freely forgive you for the injury which you would have done me, and I will not expose you so long as any signs of amendment appear—but if I should find it necessary to take such a course, to save a friend from peril, I shall not scruple to unmask you. Farewell for ever !

She was about leaving the room, when Robert Barker, with tearful eyes and choking utterance, called upon her to stay. He sprang towards her, and would have caught her by the hand, but she recoiled from him, and, waving him off, exclaimed—

‘Touch me not ! I have forgiven you, ’tis true, but make not that an excuse for insulting me !’

‘It is fit that you should loathe me !’ exclaimed Barker—‘fit that you should regard me as a poisonous reptile, and shun me as you would a pestilence ! It is fit that you should do this, for I feel, while in your presence, that I am, indeed, a thing to be despised and condemned, but yet I implore you, by the charity which the Saviour of mankind exercised when he gave utterance to the hope-inspiring words, ‘Go, and sin no more,’ hear me, but a moment !’

‘Go on,’ said Helen, quietly.

‘I admit,’ continued Barker, ‘that I have been profligate, reckless and wicked, but I never was the wretch which you are willing to believe me. I never throughout my licentious career, forgot the respect which was due to virtue—I have made companions of the profligate and vicious, but I have never brought disgrace to an honest man’s hearth, and I would (may God so prosper me as I speak truly !) have rescued you from that vile den, had I but known the circumstances under which you were brought there, even though death itself had been the consequence of my interference.’

The spirit of truth gleamed in his eyes, and shone in every lineament of his face as he spoke, and Helen believed him. With a sweet smile she answered—

‘I am happy to hear it, for there is a hope that that one spark of virtue, nearly obscured though it has been by the mists of crime and folly, may now receive a new effulgence and burn with a glorious light hereafter. Farewell!’

‘But one moment more!’ cried Barker, as she again turned to go—‘May I not think of you hereafter, and indulge in a hope that however distant the time, I may again behold and speak with you?’

She shook her head.

‘Consider well,’ he exclaimed imploringly, ‘ere you condemn a soul newly awakened to virtue and to hope, to blank despair forever! I feel that upon you depends either my salvation or my irretrievable ruin. Bid me hope, and the panting deer never strove harder to reach the limpid stream than I will strive to gain the waters of eternal life, but cast me off totally, and like the drowning mariner in the ocean, without help at hand, I will cease to hope and I am lost. O, be merciful! be just! I do not ask you to love me—that is a heaven which I dare not even hope ever to reach, but I ask you to be my friend—my sister! Say that we shall meet again, and the recollection of that promise shall act with me as an incentive to deeds of virtue—never will I forget it—like a charmed talisman I will hug it to my heart, and it will render me proof against the shafts of ridicule and abuse, and all the wiles which Satan spreads to catch the erring. Say, shall we meet again? Answer but yes, and till that blessed time my life shall be one long day of penance for past offences!’

As he stretched his hands imploringly towards her, a look of painful earnestness dwelt upon his features, and his whole soul seemed to hang upon her answer. He did not wait for it long. For a moment only she hesitated, and then in a voice tremulous with emotion, and plaintively sweet, she replied—

‘I feel that you are indeed penitent, and I will grant your request, providing that nothing happens in the meantime which would justify me in withholding my promise. But I will not say when our next meeting shall take place. I may come upon you when you least expect it, and I may give you warning of my approach—circumstances will regulate the manner of my coming. In a short time I leave here for my home in the country, and it is uncertain when I shall return to the city again, but in conclusion, rest assured of this, that whether we meet again or not, depends entirely upon yourself. And now farewell.’ She extended her hand as she finished speaking, and rushing towards her, he gently took it and covered it with burning kisses—then letting it fall he sank abashed into a chair, and buried his face in his hands. When he again raised his head he was alone, but he arose from his seat with a light heart and a buoyant spirit. His good angel had indeed departed, but it seemed to him as though a portion of the holy light which radiated from her heaven-lit eyes had found a nestling place in his sin laden soul, and burned there with a steady fire.

‘Well,’ said Minnie Jay, coming into the room just after Helen had departed, and looking mischievously at Robert Barker, ‘have you and Miss Wallace made up your last night’s differences, or have you sent her off in a passion again?’ (The little teaze had just left Helen talking to the old folks up stairs, in the very best of humors.)

‘No, Miss Jay,’ was his reply, ‘thank fortune she did not leave me in anger—on the contrary I trust we parted, if not quite, at least *almost* friends.’

‘Well, if that’s the case,’ said Minnie, with a laugh, ‘I suppose you’ve accomplished all you came for, and now you might as well clear out, and leave me at liberty to do my work. Tell the truth now, didn’t you expect to meet her here?’

‘To be candid with you,’ replied Bob, smiling, ‘I did not

expect to meet her here, but I did wish to, and I suppose that's about as bad.'

'To be sure it is,' said Minnie, with affected displeasure, 'quite as bad—so off with you, and don't let me see you here again, till—till—till—you're inclined to come!'

'Well, good morning then,' said Bob, 'if you're in such a hurry to get rid of me,' and putting on his hat he sallied forth.

It was shortly after this that he met the ill-fated Sam Slocumb, as before mentioned, and on leaving him, he took his way to the halls of justice where he lodged a complaint against a certain infamous house, after which he went home, and shutting himself up in his library, he took up the first volume that came to hand, and tried to argue himself into the belief that he was reading when he was doing nothing of the sort, but keeping up a very strong thinking all the time about a certain young lady instead.

The next day mother Waffles, together with all the inmates of her house, including Mr. George Cantwell, who happened to be there at the time, were arrested on a charge of keeping an infamous house. They were not kept in durance long, however, for money is all-powerful in such cases. Bail was easily obtained, and it was not a great while afterwards that they were at the old business again, with renewed energy. They were not a little surprised when they ascertained who it was that had laid the complaint against them, and Cantwell, with a terrible oath swore that Bob Barker should answer for it, if it ever lay in his power to bring him to account.

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## CHAPTER XX.

AFTER the escape of Estelle, Everard Emory left no means untried to gain a knowledge of the route which the fugitives had taken. In vain did he fee different members of the detective force to search the city, in vain did he advertise in the daily papers—he could learn nothing of them. This gave him considerable concern. Not that he cared at all for his wife, for he had grown tired of her, and the assurance that she was dead would have rejoiced him. But a degree of affection had sprung up in his cold, selfish heart for his child, and he would have given much could he have obtained possession of it. It worried him to think that Estelle should have the rearing of the boy, for he knew that she would teach him to hate his father, and apart from his desire to gain the child's affection, it would have been a gratification to him if he could have thwarted her.

He staid in the city for about a month, and then in despair of ever finding them, he took his way back to —, in about as amiable a mood as a hungry tiger might be supposed to entertain after having been cheated of his prey.

It was dusk when he arrived at home, and after having doffed his coat, put on a loose gown, encased his feet in slip-

pers, swallowed about a double dose of brandy and water, and lighted a cigar, he seated himself in an easy chair, placed his heels upon the back of another, fetching them about on a level with his head, and as he gazed dreamily at the lazily-ascending smoke which he puffed at intervals from his mouth, a look of malice and serenity blended seemed to rest upon his hypocritical face.

Suddenly he was startled by a rap at the door, and bringing his feet to the floor, he growled out 'Come in!' in answer to which bidding, Mr. George Cantwell, blandly smiling as usual, made his appearance.

'All alone, eh, Emory?' he said, in his chuckling, tantalizing way, 'indulging in solitude? Well, it's agreeable, sometimes—provocative of thought, ain't it? I like it myself, occasionally—I'm fond of getting alone by myself, and thinking how much good I've accomplished—how many charitable institutions I've founded, how many missionaries I've sent out among the heathens at my own expense, etc. Pleasant—he! he! he!—very pleasant—ho! ho! ho! Oh, my!'

'What do you want?' asked Emory, abruptly, and in a stern tone.

'O, nothing particular,' was the reply, 'only I was going to town to-morrow, and I thought I'd call and let you know, thinking that perhaps you might have some business for me to attend to.'

'Clear out!' said Emory, 'and don't let me see your face again till I send for you.'

Cantwell started to go, but he had scarcely reached the door, when his employer yelled out—

'Stay! You're in a great hurry to obey me when there's no need of it. Sit down, and keep your tongue still.'

Cantwell as ordered threw himself into a chair, and his face plainly indicated the exultation which was in his heart. He saw that Emory was greatly troubled in mind and he was pleased in a corresponding degree. Indeed, so strongly did

this feeling have possession of him that he could not repress an audible titter of satisfaction.

‘What are you laughing at, you beast?’ growled the rich knave.

‘O, nothing,’ replied Cantwell, ‘I was just thinking of a good joke I heard to-day, that’s all!’ and again that malicious giggle escaped him.

‘You lie, you dog!’ yelled Emory, furiously, ‘you know that I’m in trouble, and you are exulting over it!’

‘No, no—honor bright!’ exclaimed Cantwell, with affected sensitiveness, ‘do you suppose I’m so much wanting in respect to you as to indulge in merriment at your expense? O, no—I beg you wouldn’t think it! But that was such a capital joke! The more I think of it the funnier it seems! He! he! he!’

‘I say you lie!’ roared Emory, ‘you are laughing at me!’ Then suddenly looking Cantwell full in the eye, he continued, ‘if the joke is such a capital one, suppose you retail it so that I may enjoy a laugh as well as yourself?’

‘Well,’ answered Cantwell, somewhat frightened at this sudden demand upon him, and hesitating to make up a lie, ‘you know old Bowring the broker, don’t you? Well, he met Briggs on ’Change the other day, and addressing him he said, ‘Briggs,’ said he, ‘how’s Harlem?’ ‘Harlem?’ answered Briggs, ‘Harlem? why, Harlem’s pretty well I thank you!’

Here Cantwell paused, but observing that Emory still glared angrily upon him, he continued—

‘That ain’t where the laugh comes in, though. Then Bowring, he said, ‘Briggs,’ said he, ‘do you know why you’re like—no, that ain’t it—why I’m like—no, that ain’t it, neither—do you know—’

‘Silence!’ roared Emory, ‘you poll-parrot!—you drivelling fool! you unmitigated jackanapes! Do you suppose that I’m so dull as not to see through your rank hypocrisy? Look you! be a little more careful how you outrage my feelings in

future, do you hear, or some day in my anger, a bullet hole will let out what little brains you possess. Now tell me, can you imagine any way by which I would be likely to trace my wife? If it were to gratify yourself I have no doubt you could do it, but since it's to gratify me, I suppose the task will be a hard one. However, to lighten it, I will give you a thousand dollars if you will find out where she has gone.'

A look of savage joy danced in the eyes of Cantwell, at this liberal offer. He had waited some time for Emory to make it, and it had come at last. He *did* know what port she had sailed for, but he was not going to tell Emory—no, not for a thousand dollars ten times told, much as he loved money. He did not know, however, that Slocumb's career had been so suddenly cut short—he was under the impression that Estelle and Kate O'Donnell were by that time in New Orleans, and Slocumb with them. He knew that Estelle had not taken her babe with her, too—he had gained the knowledge that she intended to leave it behind, and who she intended to leave it with, while listening at the door when Estelle and the servant were forming their plans. He knew much that Emory would have rejoiced to know, but he determined to keep the knowledge to himself, and send Emory on a wild-goose chase, if possible. So assuming a serious air, he replied in answer to his employer's question—

'Well, I don't *know* anything about the matter, but, now I think of it, a little circumstance happened about two weeks ago which, perhaps, will throw some light on the matter. At that time I met a mutual friend of ours—Sam Slocumb—who told me that he had induced your wife to run away and accompany him to one of the country towns in the State of Connecticut, where he had been purchasing a piece of property. He said he didn't have to coax her much—that she seemed perfectly willing to go, and he had no doubt that they would get along very well together. He said he had determined to assume the name of Matthews, while she would take the name

of your old flame, Jeannette, and pass as his wife. He also said that she was terribly bitter against you, and intended to teach her boy to hate the name of Emory. Now, I don't know that this is entitled to a moment's consideration, but Sam has not been seen since, and that certainly looks suspicious.'

The working of Emory's countenance was fearful to look upon at different parts of Cantwell's statement, and, unable longer to contain himself, he sprang from his chair, and, seizing his tantalizing employee by the throat, he shouted—

'Devil! why did you not tell me of this before?'

'Keep cool, my dear sir!—don't get in a passion!' expostulated Cantwell, as he struggled to free himself, and, having at length succeeded in breaking Emory's hold, he induced that individual to reseal himself, when he continued: 'I didn't speak of it before, for the simple reason that I didn't believe a word of it. You know what a fellow Sam is to talk. He is always boasting of his conquests among women, and half the time there's no truth in what he says, though, to do him justice, he is very often successful. Nothing is easier, though, than for you to satisfy yourself of the truth of his story. A day's travel will take you to the spot, and, if you don't find it so, you will only have to come back again. You asked me for the information—I have given it, and I don't see why you should get in a passion about it.'

'I will go,' exclaimed Emory, decidedly, 'but first I will institute inquiries as to whether Slocumb has lately purchased any property in Connecticut, and also whether he has been absent from the city for the length of time which you say he has. If upon enquiry the story proves true, well and good. But if you have been inventing a story to torture me, beware!'

'All right,' answered Cantwell, 'I hope you will find her, but if you do not it will not be my fault.'

A silence of a few moments ensued, when at length Emory asked,

'Do you think I will be troubled with her again?'

'Guess not,' returned Cantwell. 'She promised me, at the last interview I had with her, that she would never disturb you again, and I think you may rest easy on that head, for to judge from the way she looked I shouldn't wonder if she was past disturbing any one by this time.'

Another pause ensued, and then Emory, with a look of malice, enquired

'Do you think these worthy relatives of mine, the old man and his remaining daughter, knew anything of Estelle's intention before she ran away?'

'Can't say,' answered Cantwell, 'such a thing is possible—they may have been a party to the affair for what I know. It is not at all likely that they would acknowledge it however if they were.'

'I am not foolish enough to suppose that they would,' answered Emory, 'so I shall not waste my breath by asking the question, but shall treat them as though I knew them to be my enemies. Send the old man here.'

Cantwell left the room to obey the order, and as he passed through the entry leading to old Mr. Grant's apartment, he muttered to himself, 'I do manage to tease him some—I can see him writhe beneath the torture, and Oh, how it gratifies me; but if he *should* go to Connecticut—ah, there, indeed, I have a surprise for him, which will well repay me for the trouble I have taken.'

He reached the old merchant's apartment, and knocked at the door. It was opened by Mr. Grant himself. The old man was terribly wasted, and no one would have recognized in him the hale, hearty man of a few years previous. His frame had shrunk to a mere anatomy of his former self, and he was as nervous as a drunkard.

'Ah, how are you, dad?' exclaimed Cantwell, with impudent familiarity, 'hope you're well—Emory wants to see you, right away.'

There was a time when such a salutation from such a per-

son as Cantwell would have subjected the utterer to a fall upon the floor from the strong arm of the old man, but he had grown familiar with all sorts of indignities now, and did not mind it. After the flight of Estelle, Emory had grown actually brutal in his conduct both to him and his daughter, and he dreaded even to look upon him. So instead of taking Cantwell to task for his impudence, he merely enquired in a voice betraying great nervous agitation, 'Do you know what my son-in-law wants with me, Mr. Cantwell?'

'No, dad,' was the reply, 'I never stop to inquire into his motives, and I'd advise you not to do so. He's always doing a kind turn for somebody, though, and I suppose that's what he's after now—probably he is about to redeem the promise which he has been making you all along, that he would set you up in business.'

'Do you think so?' enquired the old man, eagerly—'did he look pleased? Maybe he has heard tidings of Estelle! I'll go to him right away! He isn't such a bad man after all—no, no, there's worse men than Emory!' and the poor, spirit-crushed old man, who had been brought almost to the verge of idiocy by harsh treatment, arose and took his way towards his son-in-law's apartment, while Cantwell, with a heartless grin upon his repulsive countenance, departed from the house.

When old Mr. Grant entered the room where Emory sat, the latter was resting his head upon the table, as though in a profound study—when he heard the door open, however, he raised his eyes suddenly towards the old man, and growled out—

'Now, then, old man, do you know why I've sent for you?'

'No, my son, I do not,' was the tremulous answer of the old gentleman, whose heart, which Cantwell had lightened considerably, again sank like lead within him at the stern tone of the tyrant.

'Then I'll tell you,' said Emory; 'you've been living upon

me long enough—and now I want you to go—both you and your precious daughter.'

The old gentleman did not seem to comprehend the cruel fiend's meaning, but stood gazing upon him with a bewildered air, as though willing for an explanation, and yet dreading to ask for it.

'I want you to go! To clear out!' repeated Emory; 'don't you understand, you nervous old fool?'

'Yes, certainly, my son,' replied the old man, with a smile of incredulity that would have touched a heart of stone—'I understand—you want me to go somewhere for you, and I'll do it—of course I will—where is it? where shall I go?'

'To the poor house!' shouted Emory, springing to his feet, and regarding the old man with a look which caused him to quake with fear—'to the poor house, or anywhere else—to the devil if you like, but you must leave here! Now do you understand?'

He was answered only by a meaningless stare. The last feeble ray of reason had fled from the poor old man's brain forever! He was a gaping, staring, leering idiot!

Three days afterwards Florence Hollowell was turned out of the house, and her father was sent to the Lunatic Asylum, having accomplished which noble acts, Everard Emory started for New York, where he satisfied himself by enquiry, that Sam Slocumb had disappeared, and that he had also recently purchased a piece of property in Connecticut, and then he started for the town in that State designated by Cantwell.

He reached there without accident, and having put up at a hotel, he proceeded to make enquiries concerning the fugitives. He learned from the landlord that a gentleman calling himself Matthews, accompanied by a female, had arrived there about two weeks previously—that the gentleman had almost immediately left again, but that the lady was still there, and that he believed she was quite unwell. Emory was now certain that he had got on the right trail, and the house which he was

anxious to find having been pointed out to him, he proceeded to it at once, and knocked for admission. The door was opened by an elderly man upon whose countenance rested a shade of deep melancholy, and without ceremony, Emory enquired—

‘Is there a Mrs. Matthews stopping at this house?’

‘There is a *Miss* Matthews stopping here,’ was the reply, ‘at least she was here when I left her bedside this moment, but already her soul may have taken its flight, for she has been dying this two hours.’

‘And where is her infant?’ asked Emory, abruptly.

‘Her infant!’ echoed the man, and for a moment a look of mingled shame and sorrow overspread his face, but at length he continued, ‘well, well, I see that you know all, and concealment is useless—her infant is dead!’

‘Then let me see her before she dies!’ exclaimed Emory, who longed for the savage gratification of hissing into the ear of his dying wife his parting curse.

‘This way then,’ returned the man, and conducting Emory up stairs he led him into the sick room.

The dying woman was propped up in her bed with pillows, and just in front of her, hiding her from the view of Emory as he entered, stood her nurse performing some kindly office. A curse was upon the lips of the fiendish hypocrite, and he rushed forward to hurl it upon the departing soul of the invalid, when what was his consternation to behold not the countenance of his wife, but that of his victim Jeannette Matthews.

A strange light gleamed in the eyes of the dying girl as she steadily regarded him, and presently her lips parted, and a feeble, yet wild and unearthly cry broke from them. ‘It is him!’ she exclaimed, as she reached forth her hand and clutched her fingers as though in the endeavor to grasp him—‘it is *him*! I knew I should see him again! Uncle! aunt! Behold my seducer!’

Her eyes closed and those who stood around her thought

that her spirit had departed. This was a relief to Emory, who at the first sound of her voice had sunk coweringly into a chair, but when he heard them say that she was dead, he assumed his usual haughty and bold demeanor.

‘Did that poor girl speak truly?’ sternly demanded the old gentleman who admitted him.

‘No,’ replied Emory, ‘she gave utterance to the words of a disordered mind. I never saw her before. I came here to seek my wife, but I have been misled.’ He looked up as he finished speaking and was horrified to observe those large, glassy, staring orbs again fixed upon him.

‘Emory! Liar! Devil!’ shrieked the fast dying woman, pausing between each word for breath, ‘you avoided me long, but fate has brought you here at last against your will to receive my dying curse! May all the ills that can beset a mortal light upon and crush you! May your future days be blasted and blighted as mine have been! May your ill-gotten wealth vanish, and may gaunt famine haunt you like a spectre! May disease waste your frame, and may carking care shatter your intellect! May you pray for death, yet live till old age overtakes you, a bye-word and a reproach in the mouths of all, a foul excrescence upon the face of the earth for the finger of scorn to point at—may misery unspeakable accompany you to your pillow when you lay down to rest at night, and may you arise in the morning only to commence a day of new sorrow, and when you come to die, as I am dying now, may the laugh of mockery and the jest of scorn fill your ears, and may the arch fiend seize ——’ suddenly her tongue refused its office, and she stopped short, as though her dreadful curse had been arrested by a messenger from Heaven. The death rattle sounded in her throat, her features became rigid, her jaw dropped, and she fell back a corpse. At the same moment, Emory, with an imprecation, rushed from the apartment, and boiling over with rage against Cantwell, turned his face homeward.

## CHAPTER XXI.

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Not long after the death of the unfortunate Jeannette Matthews, one of those extraordinary females who pretend to have a perfect knowledge of past, present, and future events, and who advertise their willingness to give, for a consideration, to all such as seek for hidden knowledge, necessary instructions concerning courtship, marriage, lost articles, etc., hung out her shingle in an obscure street in the upper section of New York. Madame Duroc was the name of this Pythoness, and as she advertised largely and charged a good round price for her 'slices of mystery,' weak-minded people of course thought that she must be something very wonderful, and it was not a great while before she was fairly run down with customers. Among the first who paid her a visit was Everard Emory, and why he called upon her, and what he thought of her pretensions may be best gathered from the conversation which took place at the interview between them.

It was early in the afternoon when he called, and he was for some time kept waiting in an ante-room before he could obtain an audience. At length, however, a little nut-headed, thick-lipped, flat-nosed African page most fantastically arrayed, made his appearance, and intimating that the mysterious lady

was ready to see him, led the way to her apartment, having reached which, he knocked in the true style of mysticism three times upon the door, in answer to which a voice sepulchral enough to suit the most ardent lover of the marvellous exclaimed—

“Enter, man of mortal mould—  
I the key to knowledge hold—  
Seek ye stolen jewels rare,  
Long-lost friend, or wife, or heir,  
Enter! you need not despair—  
Enter! Enter!”

and as the last word was uttered, the negro opened the door, and ushered Emory into the room.

It was a singular looking apartment, and somewhat circumscribed in its dimensions. In the middle of it stood a table which reached the extreme length from wall to wall, and which was covered by a cloth bearing a red ground, upon which was worked with white silk, all sorts of singular hieroglyphics and cabalistic figures. In the centre of the table stood a globe upon a large, mouldy-looking open volume filled with lines and grotesque figures, while near it upon either side were scattered heaps of antiquated books of smaller size, together with a pack of cards and a number of singularly-constructed instruments, the use of which it would have puzzled the most inventive genius that ever lived to discover. The mantle-piece was covered with skulls, cross-bones, and dried herbs, and phials containing different colored liquids were hung up in many places around the walls, which were ornamented besides by scrolls of parchment and framed hieroglyphics. The light of day was nearly excluded from the room by the close-drawn curtains, and its place was supplied only by a dimly-burning lamp upon the table, which threw its feeble, sickly rays around, rendering the place more gloomy even than it would have been without it.

The presiding priestess of this temple was seated on a sort

of throne directly behind the table. She was dressed as fantastically, but more richly, than her attendant page. She wore a blue silk boddice, studded with crimson and silver-colored stars, a flaming red silk skirt and trail, and a flowing gossamer-like scarf edged with gold rested upon her left shoulder, crossed her breast, and fastened with a bow at her right side. Her head was crowned by a wreath formed of stuffed reptiles, fantastically interwoven, while her hair hung loosely about her shoulders. Her features were good enough, but her skin seemed shrivelled and yellow, and altogether she possessed anything but a prepossessing appearance.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

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THE Pythoness sat quietly looking at Emory, after the page had disappeared, for some moments, and when she thought he was sufficiently impressed by the scene around him, she said, in a ghost-like voice—

‘Thou art incredulous, and thy heart is filled with unbelief, but thou shalt believe before thou goest forth again. Come hither!’

‘O, have done with your nonsensical rigmarole,’ exclaimed Emory, impatiently, ‘I did not come here to make a fool of myself by listening to your meaningless mummary, but to gain information which I think you may, from your position, be likely to possess.’

‘I *do* possess the knowledge which thou seekest,’ answered the fortune-teller, with a frown, ‘but whether I will reveal it or not depends upon circumstances. Thy bearing is too bold and

imperious for a man steeped to the lips in crime. Thou art a villain, and shouldst bend low in meek submission, rather than elevate thy form and contract thy brow, as thou dost.'

'Infamous hag!' exclaimed Emory, angrily, 'how dare you insult a gentleman? Indulge in another expression such as that which you have just uttered, and I will expose your charlatanry, and have you dragged through the streets before a justice of the peace, and sent to the penitentiary as a vagrant.'

'Not so fast, Sir Everard Emory,' said the Pythoness, in a tone of sarcasm, 'thou wouldst no sooner put thy threat in execution than thou wouldst cut off thy right arm. A man of thy standing in society would not like to have it known in a court of justice that he had been guilty of causing the death of a too-confiding girl by perfidy and ill-usage, and that he had been a party to the inveigling of another into a den of vice. Ha, ha!' she continued, as Emory writhed under the fixed gaze with which she regarded him, 'thou seest that I know thee.'

'Where is the proof of the charges which you allege against me?' said the guilty wretch, slightly altering his tone of defiance.

'When it is necessary (if that time should ever arrive) to produce them,' answered the mysterious lady, 'they shall be forthcoming—be thou well assured of this—I have not obtained my information without fortifying myself with testimony. I have no desire to reveal what I know, however, unless forced to do so. My trade is to make money, not to act as a conservor of the laws. Thou seekest intelligence of thy wife and child—what art thou willing to pay for a knowledge of their whereabouts?'

Emory was perfectly thunderstruck at the familiarity with his affairs evinced by the strange being before him. He was confident that he had never seen her before; and how she gained her information, unless by the aid of her occult science, he could not possibly imagine. He was not willing to admit

this hypothesis, but he was forced in spite of himself to do so. He was not a man to be easily deceived, and he had always regarded the class of individuals to which Madame Duroc belonged, as the grossest imposters. Still he was aware that certain strange forces, unknown to but few, existed in nature, and he persuaded himself that the woman in question had command of them, because he could account for her knowledge in no other way. So, after a few moments' reflection, he replied, with more submission than he had before used—

'I would give much to obtain possession of my child—for my wife I care but little. I should rather hear of her death than to capture her.'

'Give me a draft for a thousand dollars, and thou shalt have thy child,' said the Pythoness, 'but not at once—it will take me some time to obtain a knowledge of its exact locality, and some further time to secure it after. I have gained the knowledge which I seek.'

'A thousand dollars is a large sum,' answered Emory, hesitatingly.

'If it is too large an amount,' answered the woman, contemptuously, 'our interview may as well end at once. I imagined I was dealing liberally with thee.'

'But what security have I,' said Emory, in some perturbation, 'that you will act in good faith?'

'What security,' replied the woman of mystery, her eyes flashing angrily—'what better security dost thou want than the knowledge of the fact that I can crush thee at a moment's notice, if I so determine? Dost thou think that, after having succeeded in drawing thee here, I will allow thee to depart without leaving a portion of thy ill-gotten gains, or suffering the consequences? Never believe it!'

'Enough—enough,' said Emory, now completely subdued, 'I will agree to your terms;' then hastily scratching a draft with a pen which the woman dipped in ink and handed to him, he continued, 'here is the paper you require; and now when

shall I have the satisfaction of seeing my infant son safe under my care ?'

'When it pleases the fates to assist me,' was the abrupt reply; 'and now go—but before thou goest, I will give thee an indisputable proof of my knowledge of the future as well as of the past and present. Steps have already been taken by certain members of thy church to have thee expelled. The principal witness against thee is a young man named Barker, recently become a convert, and I would warn thee not to call upon him to substantiate his charges, for he will assuredly do so, to the perfect satisfaction of thy brethren. Thine only course is to put on a show of virtuous indignation, and to go out from among them without standing trial, under the pretence that thy feelings are outraged because they have dared to suspect thee.' Here she rung a bell, and the black page before alluded to, made his appearance. 'Paul,' she continued, 'show the stranger out,' and without being allowed to ask any further questions, Emory was led out as mysteriously as he had been admitted.

As soon as the door had fairly closed upon him, another door which fitted into the partition just behind the chair occupied by the woman of magic, opened suddenly, and George Cantwell, with a loud laugh, rushed into the room.

'Good—good,' he cried, addressing the Pythoness, who, taking off a closely-fitting mask, displayed to view the features of Florence Hollowell, 'why, Florence, you play your part admirably—far beyond my most sanguine expectations. A thousand dollars at the very first effort. Well, he promised me as much as that for sending him to Connecticut, but he didn't dream of paying me in this way. Oh, you are a very queen of mysterious ladies!' and in his ecstasy he caught her in his arms and embraced her warmly.

'Moderate your feelings a little,' exclaimed Florence, breaking from him, 'and don't be too familiar, or you will

force me to give up an occupation which I would gladly continue somewhat longer.'

'Not for the world!' answered Cantwell—'after such a glorious beginning it would grieve me more than I can tell to relinquish the game. We are equally interested in this affair, both as regards satisfaction and emolument, and although I should rejoice to claim a more intimate relationship with you, still sooner than any cause of difference should exist between us, I will become a *silent* partner, and never even speak to you.'

'It is well,' answered Florence, 'see that you do not hereafter forget our compact—and now, what is further to be done?'

'Nothing, just yet,' answered Cantwell—'like the wily spider in his web, we have the fly enmeshed, and we may now take our time to entangle him. We can put him off from time to time with false promises—lure him on step by step with ingenious devices—drain him dry of his wealth, then force him into the commission of some crime—murder if possible—and then hang him. Glorious! glorious!' and in his transport he danced around the room like a crazy man.

'I fear that you are altogether too sanguine,' said Florence, seriously—'you seem to forget that there is a possibility of failure—Everard Emory is a shrewd man, and not easily duped so egregiously. He may perhaps fall into an error, but it does not follow that he should continue therein, and he may wake up when we least expect it.'

'I have counted all the chances,' was the reply of Cantwell, 'and I tell you we must succeed. He never can discover my agency in the matter, and as for you, your own father wouldn't know you in your complete disguise and excellently well altered voice.'

'By the way,' asked Florence, 'how did you succeed in drawing him here?'

‘By the simplest contrivance in the world,’ answered Cantwell. ‘I knew that he would go to any place where the slightest possibility existed of his hearing from the fugitives, and although I was aware that he had no faith in fortune tellers, I argued—and as the result proved correctly—that he would be very apt to visit one, if his attention was called to that portion of your circular wherein you pledge yourself to find lost relatives; so I gave a boy a lot of them to distribute among the passengers on board of the boat which brought him to New York, and had the satisfaction of seeing him take one and read it, in the absence of something better to do—if this had failed, I should have tried something else, but it was entirely successful, and so further trouble on that score was saved me.’

‘That was a good move of yours in exposing him to Barker,’ said Fanny approvingly.

‘I flatter myself it was,’ replied Cantwell, “and I had a double purpose to serve. I have a little account to settle with that same Bob Barker for causing my arrest, and by leading him to procure Emory’s expulsion from the church—binding him, at the same time, by the most solemn obligations, not to reveal his informant—I made for him a most inveterate foe in Emory, who will move heaven and earth to be revenged upon him. Thus you see they are both instruments in my hands—they injure each other, and I am revenged upon both, while at the same time I am not suspected of having any hand in the affair.’

‘You are an excellent plotter, Cantwell,’ said Florence, in a tone of admiration, ‘and I can’t see what has ever kept you in your present position. I should think that talent such as you possess would command a higher place for its possessor in the social scale than that which you occupy, and as for money, what keeps you from being immensely rich?’

‘Well, as far as position in life is concerned,’ said Cantwell, with a laugh, ‘I suppose my extreme modesty has kept me

back, but as to wealth, I can't plead poverty—on the contrary, I must admit that I have every reason to feel satisfied with fortune for the manner in which she has served me. I don't think I can ever become a beggar.' He paused a moment—and then, as a malicious chuckle escaped him, he continued, 'Yes, as you say, I am able to hold my end up when it comes to deep calculation, but I did come near slipping up in that last affair with Emory. I had all I could do to convince him that I was sincere in sending him to find his wife in Connecticut, but I succeeded at last.'

'And what argument could you possibly have used to convince him?' enquired Florence.

'Why, I persuaded him,' answered Cantwell, 'that it was a plan of Slocumb's, who in a vindictive moment determined to "sell" me, and through me, him—before I could make him believe it, however, I had to take my oath that I had met Slocumb the day after he (Emory) had started for Connecticut, and that he had acknowledged to me that he had accidentally become acquainted with the history of Jeannette Matthews, who was in some way related to him, and had practised the deception to punish Emory.'

At this point in the conversation the street door bell was violently agitated, and shortly afterwards the negro page, Paul, grinning from ear to ear, again made his appearance.

'Who is it this time, Paul,' questioned Florence, 'a gentleman or a lady?'

'A gemman,' answered the negro, 'an' I golly! wot a fine lookin' gemman he am too! Such mustachers, an' whiskers, an' jewelryery, an' eberyting. De lord-a-massy, dat pusson pay for havin' he fortune told, shu'!'

'Please attend to your own business, you little imp of Satan,' said Florence, angrily, 'and keep your tongue between your teeth, do you hear?'

'O yes, I'se got nuffin to say no more—I'se done,' answered the negro, 'shill I fotch de gemman up rite off?'

‘Yes, fetch him up at once,’ replied Florence, ‘and see that you do it properly, or look out for those long ears of yours.’

‘Needn’t be ’feard,’ answered the negro, ‘Paul got de items, dis nigger know what he ’bout!—Phew!’ and winking significantly, he again displayed his ivory and disappeared.

‘Now, then,’ said Cantwell, ‘I must make myself scarce. I hope this customer may prove as desirable a one, as he who has just departed, but that would be almost too much luck for one day.’

He entered the secret room from which he had but a short time before emerged, and shortly afterwards, with all the ceremony which had been before observed, another individual was introduced into the presence of the *Mysterious Lady*, who was of course seated on her magic throne, and fully prepared to receive him.

‘Most terrible and august being,’ began the new comer, in a tone of mock seriousness, ‘with a deep sense of the awful power which you possess, and with all due humility and a disposition to ‘shell out’ liberally, I prostrate myself before you, and beg that you will afford me some information concerning an individual who but a short time since left these premises.’

At the first sound of his voice, a tremor seized Florence, who gazed eagerly into the face of the stranger, and even after he had ceased to speak, she continued to study his features carefully without deigning to reply.

‘Cause me not to sink beneath the insupportable gaze of thy majesty, O, lady of mystery!’ again began the stranger, almost laughing outright in spite of his endeavors to preserve a grave demeanor, ‘but speak to thy servant—O, speak! As the perplexed Hamlet says, ‘Let me not *bust* in ignorance!’

Florence struggled desperately to gain the mastery over herself, but she dared not trust her tongue to utter a word, and as the stranger playfully approached her, and endeavored

to take her hand, a loud shriek burst from her, and she fell senseless to the floor in a swoon.

‘Hello!’ exclaimed the stranger, springing towards the window and throwing open the shutter, in order to admit more light, ‘Egad! this is more than I bargained for! what the devil, I wonder, ails her mysterious ladyship!’ Then approaching Florence, he raised her from the floor, and discovering the mask, detached it from her face just as Cantwell entered at one door and the negro Paul at the other. ‘By all the gods on high Olympus!’ he exclaimed, ‘may I never taste the sweets of matrimonial bliss again if it isn’t my wife!’ Then recognizing Cantwell, whom he had seen upon two or three occasions at Emory’s house, he exclaimed, ‘Why, Cant., old fel, how are you, and where did you come from so suddenly?’

‘The best thing you can do,’ answered Cantwell, stiffly, and endeavoring to appear at his ease, ‘is to leave here as speedily as possible, if you do not wish to be furnished with lodgings at the expense of the State.’

‘Now,’ said Hollowell, in a tone of mock sincerity, ‘is that your candidly given and disinterested opinion? But I won’t question it—I have no doubt that it is, and you can’t tell how much I am obliged to you for it, but really I couldn’t think of leaving without having a few words with my dear wife, whom I have not seen before for a long, long time. Here, Snowball,’ he continued, addressing Paul, ‘rush off and get a pitcher of water.’

‘Here am water, massa,’ replied the negro, going to a closet and producing a pitcher.

‘Here—let’s have it!’ exclaimed Hollowell—‘There!’ he continued, as he dashed the entire quantity over the face and neck of Florence—‘that’ll fetch her around.’

He calculated rightly. Florence almost immediately slowly opened her eyes, but as they fell upon the countenance of Hollowell, she shudderingly closed them again.

‘Now don’t “go off” again,’ urged the free-and-easy knave,

‘don’t, dear—please don’t—it’s so much trouble, you know, to keep fetching water. I don’t know the person I’d take more trouble for than I would for you, but then you know it’s so dem’d disagreeable! There you go again!’ he continued, ‘here, Snowball, some more water—quick! d’ye hear?’

‘Yes, massa,’ answered Paul, and he was about departing, when Florence, who had by this time entirely recovered, and had only closed her eyes to shut out the disagreeable face of her husband, stopped the boy with an impatient wave of her hand, and looking straight at Hollowell, exclaimed, in a tone of the deepest hate—

‘I had fervently hoped that you were either dead or immured for life within the walls of some gloomy prison, but it would seem that I am never to be entirely rid of you. What, in the name of all that is evil, induced you to come this way?’

‘Partly, the close pursuit of a gentleman connected with the law, who is extremely anxious to make my acquaintance—partly from a desire to vary my line of travel, but chiefly, the hope of seeing my darling wife,’ replied Hollowell, attempting to embrace Florence, who had risen in her feet, and stood scowlingly regarding him.

‘Fiend! beggar!’ she exclaimed in a tone of bitter disgust, ‘out of my sight! begone! I should think the base wrongs you have already heaped upon me, would secure me immunity from further persecution at your hands.’

‘Well, I like *that*!’ exclaimed Hollowell, ‘but it strikes me that in this case *I* am the injured party! A pretty state of affairs, truly! Do you call this living up to your matrimonial obligations? At the altar did you not solemnly swear to love, honor, and obey me? To take me for better or for worse, and to stick to me through good and through evil report? Did you not violate your solemn vows almost as soon as they were uttered? and now, when I again find you, after a long, and, to me, an excruciatingly painful absence, instead of rushing into my arms as an affectionate wife should do, you

talk of wrong and persecution! I am astonished at you! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Florence! Your unkindness will break my heart!' and the facetious adventurer, with a ludicrous air of assumed grief, applied his handkerchief to his eyes.

Florence could not answer; for she was choking with rage, and Cantwell stepped in to her assistance—

'Do you intend,' said he, addressing Hollowell, 'to leave this place at once, while you have an opportunity of doing so with safety, or will you put us to the trouble of furnishing you with an unpleasant abode, gratis?'

'Us!' exclaimed Hollowell, laying a strong emphasis upon the word—'come, that sounds business-like—We, Us & Co.,—I see how it is, now—you and Flor. have formed a co-partnership in the fortune-telling and matrimonial line, and my presence here is disagreeable—you think I will interfere with the latter branch of your business—but I don't know—perhaps we may be able to come to terms—the fortune-telling must be lucrative, when you can boast such patrons as Everard Emory, and if you will give me one-third of the gross profits, I won't interfere with your domestic arrangements. Nothing could be fairer than that. Come, what do you say?'

'You poor, mean, contemptible wretch!' exclaimed Florence, again finding her tongue, 'is it possible that such a pitiful apology for a man can be found as he who is willing, for the sake of money, to submit to a wife's dishonor!'

'O, well,' exclaimed Hollowell, with an air of perfect *nonchalance*, 'you needn't get so angry about it. If you wish me to assert my conjugal rights, of course I will do so. Anything to please you. At present I am the most accommodating man alive; for the fact is, my area of liberty is somewhat restricted. I scarcely dare to walk abroad for fear that I may feel a familiar tap upon the shoulder, and my resources, I may truly say, are 'nowhere!' I stand in need of both money and a place of refuge, and I don't know to whom a man could so

naturally look for assistance under the circumstances, as to his wife. Therefore, the sooner you devise some means for my safety, the better—because if I cannot make terms with you, I must go elsewhere.'

'Quite reasonable, I declare!' answered Florence, with chagrin—'well, sir, I will tell you what terms you can make with me. Instantly leave this place—I care not where you go, or what you do—but begone at once or I will inform Mr. Emory of your presence in New York. He is very anxious to see you, and will, no doubt afford you assistance immediately.'

'Since I entered this place,' answered Hollowell in a deliberate tone, 'I have come to the same conclusion myself. The fact is, I saw Emory emerge from here, and came near meeting him face to face. I was afraid of him then, and dodged him, but curiosity prompted me to enter here for the purpose of ascertaining his business. Now, I have not ascertained what he came after, but I have found out that you received him in disguise, and that he would give considerable to know who his mysterious friend is. He is not of a very forgiving turn, I know, but he is always willing to make a good bargain, and within the last few moments I have determined, if we cannot agree, to try my luck with him. What do you think of my plan? Of course, you won't refuse to give me your advice?'

Florence at once saw that she was caught in her own trap. She had made use of Emory's name to frighten her unprincipled husband, and at the time forgot all about the game she herself was playing with her brother-in-law. As the danger which menaced her appeared clearly to her view, she deeply regretted the turn affairs had taken, for it was almost death to her to yield a point to the sarcastic, tantalizing man before her, but there was no help for it, and as he turned to go with a look of triumph on his countenance, she exclaimed—

'Stay! you have us in your power, and you know it—fool

that I was for not using more circumspection, when dealing with the devil! What are your demands?’

‘As I said before,’ replied Hollowell, blandly, ‘one-third of the gross profits, and a safe refuge in this palace devoted to the black art, will satisfy me at present. I have no doubt I shall be able to assist you materially in your vocation, which has a decided novelty for me, and if you will procure me a fitting disguise I will take your place, when you are not able to attend to business. Cantwell can look after affairs outside, and leave the management of the different departments in the house to us.’

‘I think I fully understand you,’ answered Florence, with great disgust, ‘and it is requisite that you should also perfectly understand me. I accept the terms you offer, upon one condition, which is that in everything except the business of the house we shall be perfect strangers—if this is satisfactory, well and good—if not, go to Emory, and try your luck with him, but do not forget, at the same time, that the authorities in St. Louis would be glad to learn the particulars of a murder which occurred in that city some time since. You doubtless remember the case—a certain Mrs. Dunscomb received a shot in broad daylight which proved fatal to her, but which was intended for another person?’

‘Dunscomb? Dunscomb?’ replied Hollowell, as though endeavoring to recall the circumstance to his mind, ‘oh, yes—I *do* remember, now—poor old gal! Killed her almost instantly, didn’t it? Pity—pity—wasn’t intended for her, though! Well, well,’ he continued, again reverting to the matter in hand, ‘it’s a bargain, so say no more about it—Mons. and Madame Duroc, astrologers—greatest the world ever saw—that’s the ticket, ain’t it? Hard, though, that such estrangement should exist between man and wife—especially when they are under the same roof. Don’t you think you might reconsider that portion of our agreement, Flor.?’

‘Silence, you beast!’ was the indignant answer, ‘I can only

take comfort in the idea that most of the time you will be disguised, and I shall not behold your natural face! Don't even refer to the subject again, or that moment I will break terms with you!

'And how is the other partner in the concern satisfied with this arrangement?' said Hollowell. 'What do you think about it, Cant., eh, old boy? Satisfied?'

'Yes,' growled Cantwell, 'I suppose I shall have to acknowledge myself satisfied, whether I like it or not.'

'Very well, then,' said Hollowell, in the best natured manner imaginable, 'let us, while we are together, work in concert. There is no manner of use in one pulling one way and one another: my sole object is to make money, and after I have realized sufficient capital to take me to Paris and to support me there for a while in good style, I will leave you, and (excuse my candor) you may both go to the devil for what I care. Both of you, no doubt, wish to make money, as well as myself, although if I am not mistaken you have another object in view, which I have not. You seek revenge. Now that is a feeling of which I know nothing. I belong to that humble class of individuals who are willing to sacrifice everything to comfort. So long as I have perfect freedom, plenty of money, and a proper place to spend it in, I am content. It is only when I am 'short,' that I feel vindictive. I feel myself justified in taking any means to replenish my purse, but I would not go a step out of my way at any time to procure revenge, which is neither eatable, drinkable, wearable, or fit to sleep upon. I am in favor of the largest liberty, however, and wish all persons to enjoy themselves as suits them best, so long as they do not interfere with me. Although I don't care a fig for revenge myself, I am always willing to assist others in getting it when it costs me nothing, so you two can enjoy revenge and money both, so long as you help me to obtain the latter. I won't ask you how much you've made out of Emory thus far, for I know you will be glad to get rid of me as soon as

you can conveniently buy my absence, and this makes such an enquiry useless—nor will I enquire, just at present, why he is your patron—that you can explain at your leisure. All I want just at this moment is a good dinner and a bottle of wine, for I am devilish hungry and somewhat thirsty—so if you have not those commodities in the house, just let Snowball here run out and procure them.'

'You shall have what you desire,' replied Florence, 'as soon as it can be prepared;' and she was about sending the negro below stairs with the order, when another applicant for hidden knowledge, in the person of a silly shop girl, rang the street door bell, and the two men rushed into the secret room, while Florence closed the open shutter, and prepared to receive her short-sighted and little-witted visitor.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

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It was from from no choice of locality apart from other considerations that Estelle fixed upon New Orleans as the place of her destination, but she knew that James Ely had taken that direction, and a desire to learn something of his wanderings was uppermost in her mind—for although she was too proud to make herself known to him even should she ascertain his whereabouts, yet she had not forgotten her early love, and she would have sacrificed much to see him without being seen by him. She knew besides that a thorough search would be made for herself and Kate in New York. She had heard from two or three different sources that Harry Burnton, the

young man who had offered her his hand previous to her marriage with Emory was looking for her in every direction, and having lost all confidence in the disinterested friendship of mankind, she supposed that he was actuated by the same motives in his desire to find her which had influenced Sam Slocumb. Under these circumstances, she thought that New Orleans, with its mixed and erratic population, would offer her as safe an asylum as any other part of the Union, and under her assumed name, and in the character of a young widow, travelling, with her servant, for amusement, she reached that city, without accident, and having engaged rooms at a fashionable boarding house on St. Charles Street, for herself and Kate, she felt safe from discovery.

Mrs. Blaisdell was the name of the lady who presided over the affairs of the new home which Estelle had chosen. She was a stout, buxom woman, about forty-five years of age, who although naturally a pleasant, neighborly body enough, had from long familiarity with the business in which she was engaged, contracted a habit of looking at everybody with a suspicious eye till she had by long acquaintance proved them in reality what they seemed to be. This was natural enough, for she had, in her extended experience as a boarding-house keeper been frequently deceived in the very persons with regard to whom her first impressions were the most favorable. This feeling caused her to use much circumspection in her first interview with Estelle. She scrutinized very closely both her and Kate, and asked many questions which the applicant for board considered unwarrantably inquisitive, if not actually impertinent. Being an entire stranger in the city, however, she was anxious to obtain rooms without further trouble, and she answered each interrogatory with as much suavity as she could command, though to say the truth her whole nature had undergone such a complete change that it was difficult for her even to assume a pleasant demeanor. Her proud, fretful, and now vicious heart, chafed at the slightest trifle, and although

constant practice for a few weeks had enabled her to veil her discontent beneath a hypocritical smile, the task was a hard one, for she longed to give expression to the spleen which filled her, on every occasion which served to excite it. So, although she managed successfully to pass examination under the careful scrutiny of Mrs. Blaisdell, she hated that lady cordially from the moment that she first set foot in her house, and made up her mind not to stay there any longer than she could possibly help. Not only from her dislike for the landlady, however, did she come to this determination. Another consideration urged her to seek other quarters. She was fearful lest somebody who knew her might find their way into so public a place, and safety demanded that she should not stay too long. She was pretty well guarded against surprise, however, for Kate knew all her friends and was constantly upon the look-out, so that she was sure to be warned of the slightest approach of danger.

The inmates of Mrs. Blaisdell's boarding house were of the kind generally to be found in similar establishments—persons belonging to no particular class, though all of the highest respectability, and comprising men of leisure and men of business—youths of large expectations and idle habits, and merchants' clerks of no expectations whatever, and exceedingly industrious—merchants and their families—young ladies taking their initiatory lessons at cap-setting from an anxious mother or a maiden aunt, and ladies of a certain age who, if we might take their word for it, wouldn't marry any man living, 'not even if every hair on his head had a diamond attached to the end of it.' Of some of these individuals it will be necessary to make particular mention as our story progresses, and we will commence with noticing Frank Camp, a young shipping merchant, possessing a rather fine appearance and an income of about ten thousand dollars a year—decidedly loose in his morals, (but a great favorite with the ladies nevertheless,) and very fond of attending convivial clubs, horse races, the opera, and

such other innocent amusements as the 'fast' youths of large cities have been fond of time out of mind—a practical joker of rather a heartless turn than otherwise, who would gratify his love for what he called fun at whatever cost—even to the crushing of an artless girl's heart—a jolly young bachelor, in fact, who had the name among his acquaintances of being a whole-souled fellow, because he expended his money freely and was always ready for a spree, and who did not care to gain any nobler appellation.

At the time when Estelle made her appearance at the house of Mrs. Blaisdell, this youth was paying particular attention to a Miss Lydia Dunlap, a young lady well calculated for the wife of such a suitor, inasmuch as she was vain, frivolous, and about as heartless as himself—a girl who was so selfish as actually to feel annoyed at the happiness of another, and so jealous that she never could enjoy herself in company because gentlemen would occasionally address an observation to somebody besides herself. Her father was a wealthy planter, and she had been reared in the lap of luxury and petted, humored and her whims gratified, till she had come to think that she must have everything that she wanted, whether it was possible to obtain it or not—a full sister, in short, to the boy who cried after the moon.

Well, as we have said, when Estelle made her appearance in the house as a boarder, Frank Camp was a suitor for the hand of Lydia Dunlap, but the first mentioned lady had not been in the house a week, when all the gay youth's attentions were transferred from Lydia to her. This was of course a circumstance calculated to touch so sensitive a young lady as Miss Dunlap in the tenderest point, and accordingly she felt herself called upon to act as spiteful as possible towards everybody with whom she came in contact, but especially towards Estelle, who, in her opinion, merited no lighter punishment than flaying alive for having dared to make her appearance in the house. The idea that a man who had allowed her to jilt

him, and even to show utter contempt for him time and time again without taking offence at her conduct, should suddenly transfer his attentions from her to a 'fright of a widow,' (this was the epithet she applied to Estelle,) whom nobody knew anything about, and whom nobody should care for if they did, was not to be endured. She declared that it was monstrous—that it was evident enough that Estelle was some base adventuress, travelling about seeking an opportunity to swindle people, and that the fact would appear before a great while, if Mrs. Blaisdell would only keep her wits about her. To say the truth the landlady herself was inclined to favor this view, not because Miss Dunlap had expressed it, for she had sense enough to know what actuated that young lady, but because, as has been observed, she was naturally suspicious, and Estelle had not answered every question to her satisfaction. This feeling spread like an epidemic from one to another throughout the establishment, under the careful promulgation of the slighted belle, and the consequence was that Estelle was subjected to a species of surveillance which rendered her position exceedingly annoying, and she would at once have left the house, had it not been that her combativeness was fully aroused by the treatment she received, and she determined before she did go, that she would give them something to talk about for which they should not be indebted to mere surmise. When Frank Camp first began his marked attentions to her she treated him with a hauteur almost amounting to disdain, and would doubtless have pursued this line of conduct to the end but for the reasons mentioned. When, however, she noticed the bearing of Lydia Dunlap towards her—when she had been openly made the recipient of that young lady's biting inuendoes and petty acts of malice, she resolved at once to encourage the young shipping merchant, although at heart she detested him, for she was not slow to discover that he was an exact counterpart of Sam Slocumb, and only showered his fa-

vors upon her in the hope eventually of making her the creature of his will.

Thus affairs stood, when one morning Kate O'Donnell made her appearance in Estelle's room in a state of high excitement. Her hair was dishevelled, her face scratched, her clothes torn, and she bore every appearance of having a hard tussle with somebody.

'Why Kate,' exclaimed Estelle, 'what has happened? You look as though you had been fighting!'

'That's thrue for you,' was the answer, 'an' so I have—I'm just after wallopin' a nagar in the kitchen below! But I had a hard job iv it, so I had, for bad cess to the black pate iv her, she was nigh buttin' me brains out!'

'What led to the difficulty?' questioned Estelle, 'how did the quarrel originate?'

'Well, thin,' answered Kate, 'it's nothin' but quarrelin' I've had iver since yerself and Misther Camp bekem frinds—that milk-faced young lady, Miss Durand, has bin blarneyin' the nagurs with her smiles and her presints, till divil save the wan o' thim that wouldn't kill me iv she cud. Jist now, one o' them calt me an Irish thafe and ordered me out o' the kitchen, an' whin I wouldn't go, she grabbed a holt o' me to put me out, and thin me blood riz an' I hot her a lick over the head wid the fryin' pan that stud handy, but it had no effect ownly breakin' the fryin'-pan into smithereens, an' thin, me hand to ye, three o' thim came at me at wance, but I ped no attenshin' to the last two—I sthuck to the wan I med for first, widout mindin' the blows the other two showered upon me, an' whin' I'd pounded her enough to satisfy meself I ran away!'

'And what caused her to call you such opprobrious names?' questioned Estelle, 'didn't you provoke her in some way?'

'I didn't!' answered Kate earnestly—then after a pause she continued—'they wor talkin' agin yerself, so I only thrip-ped wan o' thim up, an' her head sthruck into a pan o' flour that stood upon the hearth, an, O, yer sowl to glory! iv ye'd

ownly seen the picture she was !' and Kate indulged in a hearty laugh at the recollection of it.

'I am very sorry it happened, Kate,' said Estelle, seriously, 'for I have a difficult game to play, and everything depends upon our keeping as quiet as possible. I hope, hereafter, that you will try and keep your temper in check—not that I have any sympathy for the negroes, who might be cut piece-meal for all I should care—but by putting on a show of patience and humility our purpose may be better answered.'

'I *will* thry,' replied Kate, 'bud iv ye knew how I hate the nagurs ! Whisper !' she continued, advancing her mouth close to Estelle's ear, 'Miss Dunlap has hired ivry wan o' thim to watch yersilf and mesilf, an' listen to what we'll say when we're talk-in' together in private. She's med them all sorts o' promises in money an' presints iv they'll find out anything criminal agin uz ! I hard her make the offer mesilf whim she didn't think I was near !'

'Well, for fear any of them should be listening now,' said Estelle, cautiously, 'go out in the entry and look carefully around.'

Kate did as desired, and shortly returned.—'There is none o' thim there now,' she remarked, 'bud ye'd betther sphake low for fear they'd come while we're talking.'

'It is a good precaution,' observed Estelle, lowering her voice, 'and now, Kate, I think I've hit upon a plan which will put this amiable young lady friend of mine to some trouble. Her object is to get me out of the house. Now it would gratify me exceedingly if I could get the landlady to turn her out and allow me to remain. I think I can do it. The plan is a difficult one, and may fail, perhaps, but I'll try it. Did you ever dress in male attire, Kate ?'

'In a man's clothes, it is ?' queried Kate, 'niver !'

'You wouldn't be afraid to do so, would you ?' asked Estelle.

‘It was to serve you,’ replied Kate, ‘I’d dress in the devil’s clothes.’

‘I wish you could,’ remarked Estelle, with a look of hardihood, ‘I should be happy to call his Satanic Majesty personally into the service if possible, but I can’t, and so we must dispense with his bodily presence, and trust to his spirit to help us. I’ll tell you what I want you to do.’

‘Go wan,’ said Kate, and then she added cautiously, ‘but sphake low, for a nagur ’ud hear through a thunder clap.’

‘There is not much difference in our sizes,’ resumed Estelle, ‘and I have a suit of male clothes in my trunk which I procured before leaving home. I thought they might be useful in a case of emergency. If they do not exactly fit you, you can easily alter them to answer. I wish you to dress in them at once, and take the first opportunity to gain the street unobserved—then take your way to Mr. Camp’s place of business on Poydrass street, and hang around there till you see him start out. I am satisfied that he pays very little personal attention to the business of his house—there are other matters doubtless which have a greater charm for him. When you see him leave his establishment, follow him and enter every house that he enters if you can gain admittance. Be careful lest you are detected, for that would of course ruin us. I have great confidence in your wit and sagacity, however, and do not fear any such result. See all you can and hear all you can with safety, and after night has closed in, return here, and report to me the result of your observations. I shall be on the look-out for you, and will myself admit you, so that your entrance shall not attract attention. Here are the clothes,’ she continued, as she raised the lid of her trunk and took them out—‘now dress yourself at once. I will assist you, and I have no doubt we shall succeed in giving you the appearance of ‘a marvellous proper man.’’

She then locked the door to prevent any possibility of an abrupt entrance, and the process of transformation began, and

shortly ended with complete success, Kate declaring, when she looked in the glass, that 'she wudn't know herself,' and Estelle complimenting her with the observation, that she was 'reall y a fine looking fellow.'

The toilet being ended, Estelle went outside to reconnoitre, and after watching for half-an hour or so, a favorable opportunity presented itself, and Kate, in her disguise, gained the street, while Estelle watched her from a front window of one of the upper rooms till she was out of sight, and then returned to her own apartment, to wait, with impatient anxiety her return.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

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As soon as night had fairly set in, Estelle left her room, and proceeding to the parlor she took her seat at one of the windows to watch for the coming of her messenger. At about 9 o'clock she had the satisfaction of seeing the figure of Kate pass the house beneath the strong glare of the street lamp, and then immediately return again to await at a little distance the opening of the door, she having evidently recognised her mistress at the window. It was not long before Estelle found an opportunity to admit her without observation, and a moment afterwards they were once more safely closeted in the room where their consultation took place a few hours before.

'Well, Kate,' questioned Estelle, in an eager whisper, after

the door was carefully locked, 'what success? Did you follow him?'

'I did folly him,' was the reply, 'an' the devil's own thramp I've had in doin' that same!'

'Where did he go? Did he enter many houses?' asked Estelle.

'Iv ye wor afther askin where *didn't* he go, it wud be about as aisy for me to answer,' replied the girl, 'sure he went into a hundred places an' me at the skirt iv him all the time. It is the big wondher how I eschaped. Bud wot made ye sind me at all? Sure, I don't see that we've made anything by it!'

'Have a little patience,' remarked Estelle, 'and you shall know my plans. But first tell me where you went and what you saw.'

'Well, thin,' replied Kate, 'I hadn't waited 'round his office more nor twinty minits, when he kem out, whistlin' as though he hadn't a throuble in the wide world, and started off at an aisy gate, mesilf of course follyin' a little way behind him. Well, he wint up wan sthreet an' down another, sthopping into hotels and taverns, and other places where I hadn't the laste throuble to get admittance as well as himself, an' he dhrinking wid some wan he knew at every turn, an' mesilf kapin' in an out-o'-the-way corner, the way he wudn't see me, an' think I was dodging him—d'ye mind? At last afther I'd kept at his heels till it was nearly dark, he sthopped at a nate house in Bienville sthreet, an' ringin' at the dure bell was admitted. Now, I cudn't get in here, iv coorse, because I had no excuse to make, so I jist placed mysilf beside the stheps in the shady o' the house to wait till he'd kem out agin. I wasn't kept waiting long, for presently the dure opened, an' me gintleman med his appearance. 'To-morrow evenin' she'll be here, will she?' ses he to the woman who let him out. 'To-morrow evening, at six o'clock, widout fail,' ses the woman. 'Thin I'll come,' ses he, 'as sure as me name 's Camp.' 'Iv ye don't, I wudn't give a picayune for your chance afterwards,'

ses the woman. 'Good night,' ses he. 'Good night,' ses the woman, an' on he sthorted again, mesilf kapin' close to him as before. The next place he sthopped into was a masked ball establishment in the same sthreet, an' here I left him, for I thought it time I was getting back.'

'Kate, you have managed exceedingly well,' said Estelle, encouragingly, 'and I am highly pleased with you. You got the number of the house where you overheard the conversation, didn't you?'

'I did,' answered Kate, 'it was No. —.'

'Very well,' remarked Estelle, 'now I will tell you what I want you to do. You say the servants have been bribed to listen to our private conversations. Now, I want you to lure one of them to listen to-morrow morning. You can easily do it by suddenly passing by her, as if displeased, and at the same time muttering, loud enough for her to hear, my name, coupled with that of the landlady, as though you intended to tell me something which had just transpired. Should this fail, you must try some other plan to gain a listener. Miss Dunlap is anxious to hear something of my history, and I won't keep her in suspense. In the morning I will give you further instructions. Now take off your disguise, and dress yourself in your proper clothes. I shan't want you any longer to-night, and you may spend your time as you think proper, only don't get into any further difficulty with any of the servants. Do you understand, Kate?'

'I do,' answered the girl; 'divil a word I'll sphake to any o' them.'

'Well, then, good night,' said Estelle, and leaving Kate to arrange her dress, she took her way to the drawing room, where she was soon engaged in conversation with Mrs. Blaisdell, concerning Kate's quarrel with the kitchen maid.

'Miss Dunlap tells me,' said the landlady, 'that the whole disturbance originated with your servant, who, set on by you,

commenced a most violent and unwarrantable assault upon the black girl, Rose.'

'It is hardly necessary for me to tell you, Madam,' said Estelle, quietly, 'that the statement is entirely false. Miss Dunlap—for what reason I know not, since I have never injured her, by word or deed—takes every opportunity to throw discredit not only upon my servant, but upon myself. Margaret, (it will be remembered by the reader that Kate assumed the name of Margaret Doyle,) it is true, is a wild, uncouth thing, but she never begins a quarrel with any one.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Blaisdell, 'whatever party may have been in fault, I hope there will be no repetition of the disgraceful affair. My house has always maintained a character for strict order, in every department, and I am not at all willing it should lose its good name.'

'There is no danger of any further disturbance, as far as Margaret is concerned,' observed Estelle, meekly; 'for I have given her strict orders not to retaliate, even if she is struck. Miss Dunlap shall not again have occasion to complain of her, and I wish her uncalled-for strictures concerning myself were less frequent. But I forgive her.'

'Miss Dunlap is certainly very severe in her remarks concerning you,' remarked Mrs. Blaisdell; 'but if what she alleges is strictly true, pardon me if I say there is some slight show of reason in her animadversions.'

'My dear Madam!' exclaimed Estelle, anxiously, 'what has she dared to charge against me specifically?'

'She charges,' replied Mrs. Blaisdell, 'that your conduct when in company with the gentlemen boarders is exceedingly loose and indelicate; and she goes so far as to intimate that if you are not the wife of Mr. Camp, you ought to be.'

'Is it possible,' exclaimed Estelle, apparently more in sorrow than in anger, 'that she can have allowed her love for scandal to go so far? Why, then, forbearance on my part is

no longer a virtue, and I will expose her. Where is Miss Dunlap this evening ?'

'She complained of a headache when she left the room,' answered the landlady, 'and I believe she has retired.'

A look of gratification rested upon the features of Estelle as she remarked, 'Is not Miss Dunlap frequently afflicted with headache in the evening, of late ?'

'Now you come to speak of it,' answered the landlady, 'I believe she has complained frequently since you came in the house ; but surely there is nothing culpable in that.'

'No', answered Estelle, 'there is nothing very blameable in having a headache ; but she certainly takes a very wrong means to get rid of it.'

'What do you mean ?' asked Mrs. Blaisdell, whose curiosity was now greatly excited.

'Only,' answered Estelle, 'that she is in the habit, occasionally, of visiting a house of assignation in Bienville street—a house, too, of which Mr. Camp is a patron.'

'Mon-s-t-r-o-u-s !' exclaimed Mrs. Blaisdell, jumping up from her seat, and elevating both hands in her astonishment—'it's impossible—I can't believe it.'

'I don't wish you to take my word for it,' said Estelle, in a self-possessed tone ; 'you may have ocular proof of the fact, if you wish it. I am sorry she has forced me into making the exposure ; for she is young, and I had a hope that she might see the error of her ways, and turn from them, if not exposed ; but I am satisfied, now, that she is beyond reclamation. Her unhappy passion for Mr. Camp has utterly ruined her, and in her anxiety to keep the truth from becoming manifest, she wishes to shift the crime of which she is actually guilty, upon me.'

'Can it be possible,' said Mrs. Blaisdell, 'that I have such a character in my house ? How did you become acquainted with this frightful truth, Mrs. Graham ?'

'By the merest accident,' replied Estelle, 'my servant saw

her coming from the house followed by Mr. Camp, this very afternoon, and heard her promise as they parted that she would meet him there again at six o'clock to-morrow evening. I am satisfied that Kate tells the truth, but it is easy enough to remove every doubt by watching and following her.'

'So it is,' answered the landlady, 'and I will do it. If I find that she is indeed the character you represent her to be, she can no longer stay under my roof—but you will oblige me by not mentioning this circumstance to any body, for let her be as bad as she may, I do not wish to offend her parents, who are quite wealthy, by exposing her. I shall have to get rid of them by pleading inability to accommodate them any longer.'

'Heaven knows that I would rather conceal than publish her shame,' said Estelle, with assumed sorrow, 'and I would not have mentioned the matter at all except to protect my own honor.'

At this point in the conversation Mr. Camp entered the room, and the landlady disappeared.

'Good evening, Mrs. Graham,' said the libertine, taking a seat near her.

She did not respond to the salutation, and noticing the look of despondency which her features wore, and which she had put on purposely as he entered, he continued—

'Heavens! my dear madam, how exceedingly ill you look! Shall I not summon a physician?'

'No sir, I thank you,' she answered dejectedly. 'I will not deny that I feel unwell, but I fear that my malady is not to be reached by medicine.'

'My dear Mrs. Graham,' said the *roue*, with great apparent solicitude, 'you alarm me! What has happened to distress you?'

'Nothing unusual,' sighed Estelle, with a look of meek resignation; 'ever since I first sat foot in this house I have

been the victim of misrepresentation and calumny, and I have only been subjected to a fresh assault to day, that's all.'

'Who has dared to slander you?' enquired Camp, with warmth—'but I think I can guess—that frivolous mischief-maker, Miss Dunlap, has been busy with her calumny.'

'Yes,' replied Estelle, 'and you are the cause of it. She charges me with being too free with you.'

'Well, never mind her,' said Camp, soothingly, 'she is well known, and her mischievous gabble can do you but little harm.'

'I wish I could think as you do,' replied Estelle, sorrowfully, 'but, alas! the world is too apt to take sides against the weak and friendless. Miss Dunlap is both rich and powerful, and has many warm friends, while I am alone in the world, and have not the reputation of great wealth to protect me.'

'My dear Mrs. Graham!' exclaimed Camp, with ardor, at the same time attempting to take her hand, 'do not say that you are friendless, while I live! You may command my wealth—my life! for (pardon the temerity which leads me to make the bold declaration upon so short an acquaintance,) I love you!'

'Ah, this is what I feared!' said Estelle, with a show of apprehension, 'this it is which causes Miss Dunlap to hate me—the demon of jealousy is awakened in her breast, and nothing will satisfy her but my utter destruction. Oh, sir, strive to conquer your unhappy passion for me, and bestow your affection upon her to whom it properly belongs.'

'She to whom it properly belongs,' urged Camp, 'has it already—I sought the hand of Miss Dunlap in marriage, and would have married her—may yet marry her, perhaps—but not because I ever have loved or ever can love her. She is a doll—a plaything—a brainless girl—and my love seeks a nobler object for its idolatry; so, although I might go through a frivolous ceremony with her to possess myself of her wealth,

I should still love you, and you only, and her wealth should minister to your grandeur.'

They were sitting with their backs to the light, and the full play of their features could not be seen, but could Camp have witnessed the mingled expression of scorn, contempt, and bitter hate which rested upon the features of the passionate young creature he was addressing, he would have regretted that he had allowed his speech to take so bold a shape. He anticipated a rebuke, but not a harsh one, for like too many of his class he had but a poor opinion of the virtue of women—his intrigues during his career of vice and debauchery had been rather successful, and this had made him bold to imprudence, so that while he feared Estelle might at first chide his boldness, he never doubted that he should eventually, by the aid of his wealth, flattery and good looks, succeed in the accomplishment of his design. The effect upon Estelle was terrible, and it took all her determined self-will to keep her from openly giving expression to her feelings. She had a deep game to play, however, and after a severe struggle with her passion, she managed so far to control herself as to answer, without any show of displeasure—

'I may at some time or other have occasion to test your friendship, and as you have been so kind as to manifest it thus openly I shall not fail to call upon you, but in the meantime I beg that you will be less marked in your attentions to me. This will not only render the calumnies of Miss Dunlap powerless, but it will lead her to treat me with more consideration, for I know that all her dislike of me springs from jealousy. Will you endeavor to gratify me so far?'

'What would I not do to gratify you?' exclaimed Camp, passionately; 'hereafter, even in your presence, although the task will render me sick at heart, I will lavish every endearment upon her. I will commence to-morrow, if you say so, the disagreeable duty.'

‘Ah, now I feel that you love me,’ sighed Estelle, with assumed fondness.

‘Love you!’ exclaimed Camp, ‘I adore you!’ and he was about clasping her in his arms, when they heard a footstep descending the stairs, and a moment afterwards Mrs. Blaisdell entered the room, and seating herself at the piano, began playing the latest fashionable air.

‘Tell me,’ said Estelle, resuming the conversation with Camp, after a few moments of profound thought, ‘did you ever, in the course of your business as a shipping merchant, become acquainted with a young man of the name of Ely?’

‘Ely—Ely,’ replied Camp, thoughtfully, ‘if I am not mistaken there was a young man of that name—James Ely, I think—who shipped some years since as clerk on board a vessel bound for Barbadoes.’

‘That is he!’ exclaimed Estelle, eagerly, ‘do you know anything of him?’

‘All I know is this,’ replied Camp, ‘the vessel was lost at sea, and it is supposed that all on board perished except the first mate, who was picked up by a homeward-bound vessel after clinging to a piece of the wreck forty-eight hours.’

‘O, my God!’ exclaimed Estelle, clasping her hands wildly, ‘then I am indeed alone in the world!’

‘Why, was the young man a relative of yours?’ enquired Camp, somewhat surprised at the earnestness of Estelle.

‘He was,’ she answered sadly, ‘an only brother. Excuse me, sir, but I must indulge the grief which this revelation gives me, alone. Good night!’ and rising, she sadly withdrew, and took the way to her own apartment.

When she had reached her room and locked the door, she seated herself, and indulged in a long train of bitter reflections, which ended in a copious flow of tears. Suddenly calling up an expression of stoicism, however, she checked her grief, and muttered to herself, ‘What have I to do with tears! I never thought to have shed one again, and I hope I shall never here-

after be guilty of a similar weakness. My heart must be stone—adamant—dead to all sympathetic feeling—and if I weep tears they must be tears of blood! It is better as it is, for while I thought he was alive some stray feelings of remorse lingered in my nature which tended to hold me in check, but now that he is gone, I can pluck them out root and branch, and yield myself up, soul and body, to the guidance of the furies, who would seem to have controlled my fate from my infancy! Tremble, all ye who cross my path hereafter, for my only study now is vengeance!’ and amid thoughts such as these, she stretched herself upon her bed, and was soon in an uneasy slumber, broken by dreams of a wild and frightful nature.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

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THE next morning, she awoke unrefreshed and unhappy, and at an early hour Kate O'Donnell knocked at the door for admission. Estelle admitted her, and as Kate entered she laid her finger upon her lip in token of her desire that silence should be observed, and whispered, exultingly—

‘Now we have thim! A nagur follyed me frim the kitchen, an’ I holt ye for a guinea ye’d see the white iv her eye glis. tenin’ at the kay-hole this blissed minit, iv ye’d look!’

‘So far, so good,’ whispered Estelle in return, ‘now I wish to hold a conversation loud enough for her to hear, which will lead Miss Dunlap to suppose, when it is retailed to her, that the keeper of the house in Bienville street, which Camp is in

the habit of visiting, knows something about me. Do you understand ?

‘I do,’ answered Kate, ‘niver fear—commence.’

Estelle then raised her voice and exclaimed, somewhat sharply—

‘Why, Margaret, what in the world has brought you here at this hour in the morning? Why don’t you learn to wait till I call for you?’

‘The nagurs down stairs wor talkin’ agin ye,’ answered Kate, ‘an’ they riz me anger, thinkin’ to git another fight out o’ me, bud insthed o’ strikin’ thim, I ownly tould thim I’d kem an’ tell yoursilf right away, an’ so I kem.’

‘Well, never mind what they say about me,’ replied Estelle—‘they don’t know anything against me, and it isn’t likely they ever will, for there isn’t a person in New Orleans who knows anything about my real character with the exception of the woman at No. — Bienville street, and she wouldn’t reveal anything unless she was pretty well paid for it. But even that danger will be removed shortly, for she leaves here at 6 o’clock this evening, and then I have nothing to fear—so let them talk on, for until they can find something against me in reality, their idle clatter will not amount to much.’

‘Sphake lower!’ said Kate, slightly dropping her voice, and assuming a cautious tone, ‘some o’ thim might be list’nin’ to you.’

‘I did come near forgetting myself,’ said Estelle, ‘and hereafter I must be more careful. I would not have been overheard for the world. Go, Kate, and see if any one is hanging about the door.’

Kate went leisurely to the door, which she opened just in time to catch a glimpse of the woolly pate of one of the house servants as it disappeared below the first flight of steps.

‘Sure I knew the black divil ’ud be list’nin’,’ said Kate, exultingly, as she returned, ‘for she’s been follyin’ me all over

this mornin'—shtickin' to me like me own shadie—an' it won't be tin minits before Miss Dunlap has the whole story.'

'Now all I have to fear is,' said Estelle, 'that Miss Dunlap may take it into her head to communicate what she hears to Mrs. Blaisdell. This would ruin us entirely, and must be prevented. It is a matter which I can manage easily enough, however. I will seek out Mrs. Blaisdell, and keep close to her all day. My enemy would not undertake to make the revelation in my presence lest it should put me on my guard, and enable me to prevent the truth from coming to light. She will therefore attempt to take me by surprise by fortifying herself with testimony. The landlady's bearing towards her will also favor my plot. After what I told her last night, she will be very likely to treat Miss Dunlap somewhat coldly. This will cause the latter young lady to keep her information to herself through spite, and nothing in the world will then prevent her from falling into the snare which I have laid for her. Now, Kate, be sure to observe a very meek demeanor all day, and do nothing which would be likely to excite the slightest suspicion.'

'I'll play my part well, never fear,' said Kate, as she left the room and took her way to the kitchen, where her appearance was the signal for a titter of contempt from the wench who had shortly before played eavesdropper. Kate didn't mind her, however, but bore all her taunts, as well as the witty allusions and sarcastic remarks of the rest of the ebony-hued company with the most exemplary patience.

Estelle made her appearance in the parlor much earlier than usual, and at once began forming pretences in her own mind which might serve to keep her near the landlady without at the same time exciting any suspicion. She was very successful, and by the time they all met at breakfast she regarded the game as hers, and felt as safe as though she had already won it. Miss Dunlap's face wore an air of complete triumph, and she was so elated with joy that her coffee went untasted, while

Estelle made herself as agreeable as possible to Mrs. Blaisdell, and treated her enemy with the most perfect disdain.

'O,' thought Miss D., 'you smile sweetly now, and are extremely pleasant; but your face will wear another aspect before you go to bed to-night!'

'Minx,' muttered Estelle, 'you have set a trap to catch yourself in, and dearly will you rue your despicable conduct towards me. Would that evening were come!'

Had Miss Dunlap's parents been at home, Estelle would not have dared to try the dangerous experiment which she had commenced, but she knew they were out of town, and would not probably be back in some days. So after preventing the possibility of the jealous girl's making Mrs. Blaisdell her confidant, she felt perfectly secure, for she knew that there was not another person in the house with whom her enemy was on friendly terms.

The day wore on, and the plot worked exactly as Estelle expected it would. On two or three different occasions, Miss Dunlap, with a malicious sneer upon her features, approached the landlady and attempted to draw her away from Estelle, but Mrs. Blaisdell treated her with extreme coldness at each offer, and at length in a fit of wounded pride and indignation she gave up the attempt.

As the hour of six approached, fortunately for the plan of Estelle, Lydia Dunlap again complained of illness, and retired to her room, while significant glances passed between the landlady and Estelle, who at once commenced preparing themselves to follow her. She had but just completed their preparations, when Estelle, on peeping cautiously through the window blinds, observed the negro servant, who had played the listener, emerge from the basement, and after casting a glance of scrutiny up at the windows, move rapidly off down the street. For a moment, Estelle's heart sunk within her, for she was fearful that Lydia had determined to send the wench instead of going herself, but this fear was dispelled almost as soon as felt, for

immediately afterwards, Miss Dunlap herself, closely veiled, emerged in the same way, and Estelle was then satisfied that the negro only acted as a sort of pioneer.

‘I believe she intends to take one of the servants with her this time,’ whispered Estelle—‘the black girl, Rose, went out just ahead of her, and I shall miss my guess if they do not meet again.’

‘Shall we start now?’ enquired Mrs. Blaisdell, who was nervous from excitement.

‘Not just yet,’ answered Estelle. ‘I think we had better let them turn the corner before we venture out, and then there will be no danger of their seeing us.’

After waiting a moment they started out, and walking swiftly to the next corner, they had the game safely in sight, and kept them so, till sure enough, they brought up at the infamous house of Mrs. —, in Bienville street, where, after ringing, both were admitted.

‘I can hardly believe my eyes!’ exclaimed Mrs. Blaisdell—‘the shameless creature! She shan’t stay in my house another day after her parents get back! I have seen enough—let us go back again.’

‘Let us wait for a few moments,’ said Estelle, persuasively, ‘perhaps we may learn who it is she goes to meet.’

The ladies were both veiled deeply, but further to avoid observation as much as possible, they entered a fancy store, and while Estelle was engaged in making some unimportant purchases, Mrs. Blaisdell posted herself at the door, and, under pretence of watching for a friend, directed her gaze towards the house which they had under surveillance.

She had not watched long, when suddenly the door of the disreputable abode opened, and the negro girl Rose came rushing out in a hurried manner, as though very much frightened at something. She was almost instantly followed by Miss Dunlap, who bore the appearance of having been rather roughly handled, her hat being awry and her hair somewhat

disordered, and she in her turn was followed by Mr. Frank Camp, who was seemingly somewhat intoxicated, and who followed Lydia up till he got by her side, when, both seemingly in a bad humor, they walked rapidly towards the store at the door of which Mrs. Blaisdell was standing. She changed her position as they approached, so that they could not see her, and as they passed, she heard Camp remark—

‘That place’ll do very well to meet me in sometimes, but not always. Why didn’t you let me know——’

The remainder of the speech was lost, but Mrs. Blaisdell had heard sufficient to convince her that her worst suspicions were more than confirmed, and calling to Estelle, they started forth, and taking a different direction from that in which Camp and Lydia had gone, they struck a brisk walk and managed to get in the house and divest themselves of their street dress, just as Lydia slyly entered at the basement, and noiselessly took her way to her own room.

Lydia had been terribly frightened and somewhat maltreated, but with the exception of a sound lesson in wisdom, she had not learned much. The fates had favored Estelle, and everything had turned out better, far better, than she had anticipated. It had so happened that just at the time when Lydia and her black attendant entered the house in Bienville street, Frank Camp and a woman whom he had met there by appointment, were coming down stairs. Lydia recognised him at once, and forgetting herself, she uttered a scream. This attracted the attention of Camp’s companion, who was of an exceedingly jealous turn of mind, and when she noticed that her lover recognised Lydia, she attacked her and her servant with the fury of a tigress, and drove them from the house. Thus Miss Dunlap was left entirely in the dark as to the revelation which she had hoped her money would purchase, and furthermore she remembered that according to the information which Rose had given her, the person from whom she had hoped to obtain the important revealment would leave town

at six o'clock. To add to her chagrin she could not disabuse Camp of the idea that she had called there purposely to see him. He was vain enough to believe anything, and he imagined that Lydia had sent a spy to watch him, and having found out his place of resort, had determined to brave everything and seek him there. In vain she told him that she had gone there to obtain an important secret concerning the widow lady, Mrs. Graham. He knew how cordially she hated Estelle, and argued within himself that she only resorted to this statement in order to injure that lady's character. It was with difficulty she could persuade him to leave her to pursue her way home alone, and when at length he did part from her, he cautioned her to be more careful in future, and advised her the next time she wanted to see him to send him notice beforehand, and he would appoint a place where they might meet without fear of molestation. All this, it may be believed, nettled the proud girl not a little, and when she reached home and found herself safely in her own room her overcharged heart relieved itself by an outburst of the most violent grief. She sought her bed, but she endeavored in vain to find relief in sleep, for the events of the day would rush into her mind one after another in spite of her endeavors to shut them out. She felt that she had degraded herself in pursuing the course which she had taken, and the bitterest reflection of all to her was that she had no possible way of getting satisfaction. She regretted that she had not spoken to the landlady in the morning, for then there was a slight possibility that her story might have been believed, but she did not dare to mention it now, for she knew that her proof was gone, and a mere repetition of what the negress had heard would amount to nothing, for it would have been set down as a lie originated by the servant to get the good will of her mistress. Every way she looked at the subject it presented an aspect which rendered her utterly miserable, and when she made her appearance the next day her countenance wore a haggard and care-worn look

which might well indicate guilt. Her life, after this, beneath the roof of Mrs. Blaisdell, was a perfect burden to her, and when in the course of a couple of weeks her parents returned to take up their abode with her, she was, much to the landlady's relief, the first one to beg that they would seek other quarters and take her with them. She gave no other reason for her desire to leave than that she had grown tired of staying so long in one place, and when they found that they could not argue her out of what they termed her strange notion, they gratified her by removing, and Estelle had the extreme gratification of seeing them all out of the house.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

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THREE months passed before Estelle had so far arranged her plans as to wish to leave the house in which she commenced her career in New Orleans. During that time she had, after much deep thought and frequent conferences with Kate, from whose shrewd suggestions she not unfrequently derived much benefit, marked out her future course, and determined to pursue it. She was not long in discovering that in order to live, and to live well, it was necessary that she should have money, and plenty of it. She would be obliged to send remittances regularly to the address of Mrs. Gardener for the support of her child—not that she loved her offspring—on the contrary, she had learned to hate it, for the thought that *his* blood ran in its veins, rankled in her heart, destroying every motherly feeling—but she knew that it would gratify Emory to gain possession of it, and she was fearful that a dearth of money

for its support would lead Mrs. Gardener to advertise it, and in that case she could easily foresee the event. So she wanted money, for her own limited stock was running low, and she knew of no occupation which she could follow to acquire more. Under these circumstances, she determined to resort to stratagem. She had no great love for virtue as a principle now, but she hated the men who would make merchandise of her charms, and as she could not always take a bloody revenge upon them, she determined to punish by swindling them. In short, she made up her mind that such characters should support her handsomely, without any other return for the accommodation upon her part than an effort to injure them whenever an opportunity offered. She had determined to make Camp her first victim, and having used him as far as she conveniently could, it was her purpose to seek elsewhere for fresh subjects.

Accordingly, after she had succeeded in driving the Dunlaps from the house, she began cautiously to approach Camp, whose ardor so far from decreasing, seemed to gain new vigor every day. She had a more favorable field to operate in, for not only was she freed from the system of espionage which Lydia had pursued, but Mrs. Blaisdell had grown less suspicious of her, and did not watch her half so closely as before. The generalship which she pursued in her intercourse with Camp was most admirable for so young a tactician, for while she led him to hope for everything, she granted nothing. She suffered him to whisper his fulsome flattery and insulting wishes in her ear, and yet kept him at a respectful distance, never compromising herself by accepting the costly presents which he from time to time pressed her to accept. This course she knew would not answer always, and at length one evening, about two months after she had commenced to angle for him in earnest, she, after much hesitation and great apparent reluctance, told him that she was about to test the truth of the declarations which he had on one occasion long before made to her.

‘My dear Madame!’ exclaimed he, eagerly, ‘how can I assist you? Consider me the slave of your will—mention your wish and it shall be gratified as soon as made known, if the thing is possible.’

‘Well,’ replied Estelle, seemingly much embarrassed, ‘I have for some time past been expecting remittances from New York, but I have this day received a letter from my agent, who informs me that my business affairs are in so complicated a state that it will be impossible for him to send me the money which I need, for some time to come. I have present use for a thousand dollars, and I thought that you might advance that sum. I know it is a delicate matter, and I hope you will excuse my apparent boldness, but I have no friend to whom I can apply in my emergency, and this must be my excuse for troubling you.’

‘Don’t mention it, my dear Mrs. Graham, I beg of you!’ exclaimed Camp, eagerly, ‘I shall be only too happy to accommodate you at any time. Whenever you stand in need of a loan only notify me a day or two beforehand, and you can not only have it, but I will consider myself the obliged party. Fortunately I have the amount which you require about me,’ and taking the notes from his wallet, he presented them. ‘All the interest I ask,’ he continued, as he replaced his pocket-book, and inclined his head towards her, ‘is that which all votaries of love expect from the boy-god—gratification!’ and as he finished speaking, before she was aware of it, he impressed a kiss upon her lips. Disgust and rage were busy in her heart, but she smothered them for a time, and a look of satisfaction glistened in her eyes, as she thanked him, and arose to withdraw.

‘But, Mrs. Graham—Julia!’ he exclaimed, as she bade him good-night, ‘is our sweet communion to end so suddenly? Will you not grant me a few moments ——’

‘I will see you again to-morrow evening,’ was the abrupt manner in which she cut short his speech; ‘at present I have

some business of importance to arrange, and I know you will excuse me.'

Estelle had every reason to feel gratified with the success of her first effort, and it was not long before she made a second which was equally successful. She represented to Camp that she had a grand project in view, which could not be carried out without money, and that it would not be a great while before she would repay him. The first part of this statement was true, but the second part was not—she *had* a great project in view—no less a one than to procure the means of living without working for it, but as to paying him, in the literal sense of that term, that was another matter. To say the truth, Camp, although a rich man, was an extravagant one, and found use during each year for an immense amount of money; he therefore began to feel rather uneasy about the large sums which he had from time to time handed over to Estelle without a return, and when, about three months after the first loan, she made application to him for another thousand, he, for the first time, complained of the tightness of the money-market, then demurred at the pertinacious manner in which Estelle continued to avoid him, and finally refused flatly to accommodate her again, except upon the condition that she would immediately thereafter elope and take up her residence with him.

Estelle did not seem at all startled at the bold proposition, but she hesitated at first—spoke of the impropriety of such a course—expressed her fears that her conduct might become known, and her character blasted—and finally agreed to his terms with perfect willingness. She received another thousand dollars—the night for the elopement fixed upon—and Frank Camp departed highly delighted, and flattering himself that he had not made a bad investment.

What a silly dolt your man of the world is, after all the experience of which he can boast! His knowledge of character—his sharp-sightedness—and his extreme caution, are

nothing in comparison to the wit of a determined woman who resolves to deceive him. Estelle, for a whole week previous to the last loan, had been making preparations to leave the house of Mrs. Blaisdell. She had watched the newspapers carefully, and having seen furnished rooms advertised in Chartres street, she had made application for and secured them, with the understanding that she could take possession whenever it suited her. Her arrangements were all made, and having settled up her bill with Mrs. Blaisdell, on the very morning after her agreement with Camp, she had her things removed. Mrs. Blaisdell had not the slightest interest in Estelle's affairs—she had got her money, and that was all she cared for. She naturally enquired, however, where Estelle was about to take up her abode, and received as an answer a direction precisely the opposite of the true one. Compliments were then exchanged between them—a carriage which had been sent for drove up to the door—the trunks were got out and fastened on—Estelle and Kate jumped in—the whip cracked—the horses started—and when Mr. Camp found his way home that evening, it was to learn that for once in his life, at least, he had been made 'egregiously an ass.'

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## CHAPTER XXVII.



THE landlord of the new residence in which Estelle had taken her abode was a Mr. Anthony (or Tony as he was familiarly called) Butters, and Estelle recognized in him, on the first day she saw him, when she made application for the premises, a fit subject for victim No. 2—this was one reason, indeed, why she had so readily taken the rooms. She had started in a new business and she determined to follow it up industriously, inasmuch as it was rather pleasant than otherwise, and promised to pay well.

Mr. Butters was a short, obese individual, about fifty years of age, with a smooth, fat, round face, and a little, nut-like head, the top of which was bald, and shone like a looking-glass. His phrenological developments plainly indicated that the animal passions predominated largely, while his lymphatic temperament betokened a love of ease and indolence. Mr. Butters was a rich man, but he was also a stingy one, and was not, as a general thing, apt to lay out his money extravagantly. Had this not been the case he would have indulged his family (consisting of a wife and two grown-up daughters) in the luxury of an entire house, instead of renting out a suite of rooms. But there was one way in which the pockets of Mr. Butters

could be reached. Alas, that the truth must be told, he was not only exceedingly amative, but ridiculously vain, and a few words of flattery from a pair of pretty lips, would at any time turn his brain topsy-turvy. As has been before observed he was constitutionally lazy and inactive, but this defect vanished when in the presence of beauty, and he never saw a pretty woman that he did not at once attempt to lay siege to her heart, by indulging in the most extravagant and ludicrous airs and speeches.

Such being the character of Mr. Butters it will readily be believed that he was overjoyed at the idea of getting as a tenant so fair and apparently so impressible a widow lady as Estelle, but a month had not rolled around after her first appearance in his house, when he bitterly regretted that he had ever seen her, for she not only *patronized* him to the extent of a thousand dollars, but exposed him to his family besides. Thus it was. Estelle encouraged the too susceptible Butters from the first moment she set foot within his premises, but as had been her plan with her first victim, she kept him at a respectful distance. She received his visits without hesitation, listened to his senseless rigmarole with apparent pleasure, and allowed him, although with some show of resistance, to occasionally squeeze her hand. When she had angled with till she had hooked him, she managed to have her trunk conveyed by stealth to furnished apartments on Camp street—then she borrowed a thousand dollars from him, *to test his love* (she knew that this was about as far as she could go with *him*,) and the next night, which was to have rendered him superlatively happy, she eloped, accompanied by Kate, and he awoke to a true sense of his position, the unpleasantness of which was vastly increased when his wife received a letter from Estelle, detailing the whole matter just as it actually occurred, and winding up with the declaration that she did not hardly think a thousand dollars paid her for listening such a length of time to the insane ravings of such an unmitigated old thickskull—such a

disgusting old beast. This was the unkindest cut of all, and Butters, who fairly groaned under it, swore with a terrible oath that he would have revenge if it cost him every cent he was worth in the world to obtain it.

While all this was going on Frank Camp was anathematizing Estelle's duplicity and his own luck, and trying his best to find out the run-away's hiding place. He did not wish to make any inquiries concerning her at the boarding-house, for this would have excited suspicion, and he would not have had his weakness exposed for ten times the amount of money which he had lost. Had the story become public he would have been made the laughing stock of his companions, and this he could not have borne. Besides he shrewdly suspected, and, as the reader knows, not without reason, that Estelle had not been foolish enough to leave her address, so all hope of information from that quarter was cut off. For nearly a month he studied constantly how he might discover her retreat, and he was about to give up the idea as hopeless, when suddenly a happy thought occurred to him—he would advertise for the hackman who had conveyed her from Mrs. Blaisdell's establishment, whose appearance he doubted not a liberal reward would secure. Happy thought! why had it not occurred to him before? It was no sooner conceived than executed, and with the hoped-for result too, but unfortunately for Camp, Estelle discovered the advertisement before he could secure an interview with the hackman, and the result was that Camp found his way to the house of Mr. Butters the very day after the bird had flown. The latter gentleman was just about going out when Camp mounted the steps to ring at the street door bell, and the two duped individuals met each other face to face in the door-porch.

'Is there a widow lady of the name of Graham residing here?' enquired Camp, anxiously.

'No,' answered the little fat man, in a tone of ill-concealed rage, 'there was such a person residing here, but she left yes-

terday—and between you and me, stranger, I'd give my right arm to know where she is at this moment.'

'I can't say I'd go quite so far as that,' said Camp, attempting to get up a smile, which however, was a decided failure, 'but I'd give considerable in the way of money for such information.'

'If I may make so bold,' said Butters abruptly, 'what may be your business with the lady?'

'Excuse me,' answered Camp, 'but that is just the enquiry I was about to make of you.'

Instantly the idea occurred to both men at once that they stood respectively in about the same relation towards the lady, and a sort of 'misery loves company' smile of satisfaction rested upon the features of each, as one stood waiting for the other to recommence the conversation. At length Butters 'grinned horribly a ghastly smile,' and merely saying, 'Good day, sir!' took his departure and left Camp in a sort of bewilderment standing upon the steps.

'Well, if she has fooled that old fellow the same as she did me,' he muttered, as he turned his face towards his place of business, '*she'll do to travel*, and that man will be sharp indeed who gets the better of her!'

While her two dupes were endeavoring to 'digest the venom of their spleen,' Estelle was laughing in her sleeve at her new apartments in Camp street. The business of fleecing began to have an indescribable charm for her, and she could not help wishing that she had the task of swindling Messrs. Camp and Butters to do over again. This she knew, however, was impossible, and she was fain to cast about her for some fresh victim. But in what direction to look for one was a thing that now sadly puzzled her. There was not a man in the new abode which she had chosen whose purse she could hope to reach, and finally after mature reflection she determined, with a boldness characteristic of her, to seek her victims outside.

'Kate,' she said, addressing the Irish girl, one evening,

about a week after she had left the house of Mr. Butters, 'I am going out to-night.'

'An' where are ye goin'?' asked Kate, in some surprise.

'I am going to the masquerade ball in Bienville street,' replied Estelle. 'If the mountain will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet will go to the mountain—I am going to seek my game in their own haunts.'

'Shure it's crazy ye are to think iv it,' said Kate, evidently alarmed.

'Not at all,' answered Estelle, 'I shall go in the same dress which you wore when you followed Camp, and I have not the slightest fear of detection. Perhaps I shall meet him there. I hope so; I may pick up some information which will enable me to relieve him of a few more thousands—who knows?'

'Ye'd betther take my advice, and not go, Misthress, dear,' said Kate, persuasively, 'shure, I'll be frightened out o' the life o' me, till ye get back agin.'

'Oh, pshaw!' exclaimed Estelle, confidently, 'don't you be alarmed. I know what I'm about, and will be very careful, both for my own sake and for yours. Come, get the clothes and help to dress me, for in about an hour it will be time for me to start out.'

Thus ordered, Kate obeyed, but it was with a heavy heart, and even when the dressing was finished, and she saw how complete was Estelle's disguise, she was still ill at ease, and as night set in, and her mistress started off, she could not help again warning her—

'Kape yer eyes forninst ye, misthress dear,' she whispered, 'an' don't be afther lettin' any blagard lade ye asthray. Walk wid a big sthride, stick a cigar in the corner o' yer mouth—ye needn't smoke it, d'ye mind—an' don't shpake more nor ye can help—d'ye mind?'

'Never fear, Kate,' was the confident answer, 'I shall be careful enough, I warrant you. Good-bye!'

'Good-bye, an' good luck to ye,' cried Kate, and the next

moment Estelle was walking leisurely along through Camp street with as much self-possession as though she had in reality been the youth which her outward show indicated her to be. She was in no hurry to reach the place for which she had set out, so she sauntered along Camp street at her ease, and had just passed the theatre, when she was startled by a cry of 'Stop thief!' immediately behind her, and directly afterwards a man, closely pursued by a number of others, rushed rapidly past her. As he did so, he attempted to throw a watch which he had in his hand down a basement way, but as it flew by Estelle, the guard-chain caught on a button of her coat, and the watch was arrested in its flight. Trembling with fear, she hastened to free herself from the dangerous piece of property, and just as she had succeeded in doing so, she found herself in the grasp of a couple of stout policemen, who, in spite of her protestations of innocence, dragged her along in no gentle manner, and it was not long before she found herself thrust with some force into a cell, the door of which was instantly closed upon her, and she was left to her own reflections. The whole incident had happened so suddenly, that it seemed more like a dream to the captive than anything else, and while she was yet reflecting upon the unfortunate chance which had placed her in such a predicament, and regretting that she had not followed Kate's advice, the door of her cell was again thrown open, and a man who struggled desperately with the officers who had him in charge, was thrust in along with her. His face was covered with blood which flowed from a frightful gash on his forehead, and his eyes glared wildly with the frenzy of drunkenness—his beard was unshorn, his hair uncombed, and his face dirty—but beneath all this disguise of rum and dirt, and blood, and passion, Estelle recognized by the bright light of a link held by one of the officers, the features of James Ely!

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

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THE first feeling which took possession of Estelle, after the surprise occasioned by the sudden and unexpected appearance of her lover had passed away, was that of joy—for a moment she had forgot all that had passed, and could only see in the pitiable object before her the cherished idol of her youthful heart—their quarrels, his departure, and her hateful marriage, were all for an instant swallowed up in one uncontrollable outburst of long-subdued love, and she was a child again. It was *but* for an instant though—for presently her heart thrilled with fear as she listened to the incoherent ravings of the victim of alcohol, as he beat against the cell-door with his fists, and plucked at his beard and hair in his impotent rage. Trembling with apprehension, she crouched down in a dark corner of the dungeon to wait till he should become more composed before she approached him, for she was fearful that he might in his delirium kill her.

‘Who charges me with duplicity?’ shrieked the madman, addressing an imaginary companion, ‘is it you? or you? or

you? Ha! you dare not answer! And why? Because you are liars! all liars! I had nothing to do with her death! How could I help her going crazy? Answer that! O, you can grin, and mock me, d——n you! but that's all—there, take that!' and as he spoke, he struck out violently at some imaginary object, and losing his balance, fell at full length upon the dungeon floor, his head coming close to where Estelle was crouching. The fall seemed to stun him, and for some time he lay motionless and breathing heavily. At length he again spoke, but this time his tones assumed more the plaintive voice of childhood than the savage vociferations of a strong man. 'O, forgive me, Hortense,' he said, appealingly. 'I cannot love you, but I will try to act a humane part by you—I should do so for the sake of our little one who is even now smiling in my face as though pleading for his mother. Don't let him cling so closely around my neck—he suffocates me! O, God!' he screamed again suddenly, while every muscle quivered with extreme agony—'Now, he is turning into a snake! His fangs are frightful! his hot breath stifles me! and I feel his cold, slimy coils, fastening around my throat in the work of strangulation! O, remove him! remove him for the love of Heaven, or I shall die!'

Estelle could not see the expression which rested upon the face of the inebriate, but his voice was piteously plaintive, and by the dim light which struggled through the bars of the cell she could perceive that he had fallen in a rather uneasy position, and with one hand was violently pressing his own windpipe. She did not think she would run much risk in attempting to render his attitude more easy, so she cautiously approached him, and gently disengaging his hand, stretched his arm out by his side. No reply from the afflicted man followed the act, but he was evidently relieved, for, heaving a deep sigh, he stretched his contracted limbs out, and after breathing heavily a few times, fell into an uneasy slumber.

As soon as she was satisfied he slept, Estelle removed his

cravat, and unbuttoned the throat-band of his shirt—she then took a handkerchief from her pocket, and, as well as she was able in the darkness, wiped the blood from the wound upon his forehead, after which she bound his head up, and then sat down to await his waking.

Painful were her reflections as she watched, in that damp and dismal place, over the form of the man she so dearly loved, for the sentences which had fallen from him in his delirium, at first impressed her with the idea that he must have forgotten her. When this conviction forced itself upon her, she reviewed the particulars of her quarrel with him and the cause which led to it—as she did so, she remembered that he did not strive, when they fell out, to keep up his acquaintance with the object of her jealousy, but left St. Louis at once, and as this fact flashed across her mind, she hugged to her heart the idea that he must have repented of the part he had played—that he had indeed loved her—that he did perhaps love her still, as ardently as she did him—that he had married in anger because of her coldness, and with a desire to forget her, but that he had found it impossible to shut love out from his heart. When she had arrived thus far in her imaginings she was filled with the most intense joy, for she looked upon him as her own again, although she could not ever hope to enjoy that peace of mind which ‘love’s young dream’ had brought with it. She did not regret that she had met him at such a time and under such circumstances. On the contrary, she rejoiced at it, for she reflected that the deeper he was sunk in sin and degradation the better he was fitted for companionship with her. ‘He is mine,’ she muttered, ‘mine, by all the powers of good and evil, for our love was first sanctioned by Heaven, and the devil now cements it. It is fitting I should find him thus, for his condition stamps us equals still—we are altered in nothing save that vice has taken the place of virtue, and virtue is but a name—a mockery—a cheat—which the more fortunate of the human race adopt to deceive their fellows! If I conjecture

rightly, I say again, he is mine; and no power on earth shall part us!

While thus communing with herself she fell into a doze, which, broken only at intervals by some frightful dream or the moaning of her fellow prisoner, lasted till the gray of dawn began to struggle through the bars of the cell. She then shook off her stupor and determined to make herself known to her lover before the officers of the law should separate them. Accordingly, with a beating heart she approached him for this purpose, and stooping over him she shook him gently and called him by name. With a heavy sigh, immediately followed by a deep groan, he opened his eyes and fixed them upon the companion of his captivity, the outline of whose figure was only as yet visible, in the uncertain light.

‘Where am I?’ he said, stretching out his hands and feeling of the damp dungeon floor on either side of him, ‘where am I, and how came I here?’

‘You are in prison,’ answered Estelle, in as altered a voice as she could assume, ‘and you was brought here last night by the officers of the law.’

‘O, then, I suppose you are here to lead me before that individual, who, under cover of the law, daily makes a mockery of justice?’ said Ely, enquiringly, and with bitter emphasis. ‘Well, I’m ready—come along!’ and he made an attempt to rise to his feet, but stopped half-way in a sitting posture.

‘You are mistaken,’ answered Estelle, ‘I am no officer, but a prisoner like yourself.’

‘And what is *your* offence?’ enquired Ely, with apparent interest—‘I know what mine is, although I have no recollection of having been brought here. My crime is drunkenness. It is a crime I admit, but there are hundreds in this city—aye, and among others some who wear the ermine—who are guilty of it, and yet escape unpunished.’

‘Perhaps the very man who in a short time will, with a majestic front and a frown of severe indignation at the enormity

of my offence, pass judgment upon me, went roaring drunk to bed last night. Yet there was no one to arrest him; and why? Because he had a grand house to get drunk in, and servants to take his abuse and wait upon him. It is only the poverty-stricken and houseless wretch who properly comes under the influence of the law, which is not intended for the richly-dressed and well-fed debauchee. But tell me, what is your crime? You surely cannot have been guilty of drunkenness, for to judge from the sound of your voice, you are much too young to know anything of the vice.'

'No,' answered Estelle, 'I was brought here on suspicion of being a party to a theft; but I am innocent of the charge. I knew no more of the affair which led to my arrest than you do.'

'Humph!' said Ely, 'have you got money—plenty of it? If you have, that story will do well enough; but if you are poor, your wisest plan would be to plead guilty to the charge, even if you are innocent. It will go easier with you. Take the advice of one who knows. If you have influential friends and plenty of money, assert your innocence even though your guilt be as clear as the sun at noon-day, for the chances are in favor of your acquittal: but if you are poor, and friendless, and homeless, plead guilty, even though you are innocent of, and would rather die than commit the offence charged against you. This is the best advice I can give you. What is your name?' he asked rather abruptly.

Estelle hesitated a moment, to fix upon a name for the time being, and at length answered—

'My name is Henry Grant—and now I suppose I may take the same liberty which you have taken, and inquire what your name is?'

Ely started at the sound of a name which was graven upon his inmost heart, never to be obliterated, but which, for many long weary days of trial and suffering, he had never allowed to escape his lips; and after a silence of some moments, during

which he seemed lost in thought, he said, apparently more to himself than to Estelle—

‘How natural it sounds! It seems but yesteday that she who bore it was a little artless girl, and myself a careless, happy boy, full of hope and promise. O, Estelle!—Estelle! where are you now? O, if you could know where and what I am at this moment, and could feel what has produced this change in me, it would wring your heart, I know, and though you might not love, you could not choose but pity me.’

Joy—wild, frantic and impetuous—filled the heart of Estelle, as she listened to the words which fell from the lips of her lover, and she could scarcely refrain from throwing herself into his arms and declaring herself. She restrained herself, however, and remarked—

‘You do not gratify my curiosity as I did yours. I ask you for your name, and, instead of answering you go on to speak of some Estelle. Well, never mind—I will not press you to reveal what you apparently wish to keep hidden. By the way, though, it seems somewhat singular to me that you should couple the name of Estelle with my last name. I have a cousin name Estelle Grant—perhaps you mean her? She was the daughter of a merchant in St. Louis—Edward Grant.’

‘I did know her once,’ said Ely, with much emotion; ‘I was, in fact, rather intimate with her—but I did not know that she had a cousin in this country.’

‘At that time, I presume, she had not,’ answered Estelle; ‘it is but about a year since I arrived here from England.’

‘And have you seen Estelle?’ asked Ely, eagerly. ‘Where is she? How is she?’

‘She was poorly enough the last time I saw her,’ answered Estelle. ‘She grieves after a youth named Ely, who first won her affection and then deserted her.’

‘How did you learn that?’ asked Ely, terribly excited.

‘She made me her confidant,’ replied Estelle, ‘and told me so herself. She told me that their course of love ran smooth-

ly enough, till he learned that she was poor, when he slighted her for one who was more wealthy; and, in a moment of wounded pride and anger, she retaliated, and that led to their separation. She said, however, that she could never cease to love him—that she should carry the recollection of his love with her always, and that all which made life at all desirable to her was the hope that she should one day be permitted to see him again without his being aware of her presence.'

'O, she was deceived!' cried Ely, in a tone of anguish, 'cruelly deceived! I am that James Ely, and I am satisfied now that we were made the victims of some heartless plot contrived by the different members of her family. O, my friend, if you should ever see her again, tell her from me, how deeply, how devotedly, how madly I loved, and still love her, although I can never see her more. Do not let her know what an outcast wretch I have become; but tell her that in all my wanderings, I have carried her image in my heart of hearts, and that my last life pulses will beat for her! O, how she would loathe me if she could see me in this guise! But she should not, for it was distraction at her loss which caused it all!'

'She *has* seen you in that guise, and she does *not* loathe you!' exclaimed Estelle, extatically, in her natural voice, as she threw herself upon his neck—'James, James—do you not know me?'

'Is this reality?' said Ely, in a bewildered manner, 'or am I deceived by some unaccountable, but blissful hallucination? Speak to me again!' he continued, as he gazed fixedly into her face, which, as daylight had considerably advanced, was now plainly discernible. 'Speak to me again! Let me once more hear the sound of that voice, and, even though you are trifling with me, I will bless you!'

'It is no deception, James!' replied the excited girl, as she clung more closely to him—'I am your own Estelle—yours, yours, forever!'

‘Who talks of misfortune, now!’ cried Ely, as he warmly embraced her, ‘it is not in fate to wring a groan or a sigh from me again. I am happy—thrice happy! But,’ he continued, as he held her from him, and viewed himself with supreme disgust, ‘are you not ashamed to take so pitiable an object as I am to your heart? Does not your soul revolt at the idea of loving so disgusting an object, and a criminal, too?’

‘No, no, James,’ she answered, ‘if you have transgressed so have I also—I have sinned beyond salvation—there is no hope for me. Even my love for you is now sinful, and, if you cannot resolve hereafter to banish every idea of virtue, and to live for revenge alone, we may as well part as we have met, for you are no fit companion for me! Say, can you resolve to forget the past, and to begin life with me anew? Can you determine to devote all your energies to the crushing of your enemies and mine? If not, farewell, after this interview, for we have talked too long already!’

‘I am yours, Estelle!’ exclaimed Ely, ‘for good or evil, for virtue or vice, for life or death, I am yours, and yours only! Do with me as you will.’

A look of joyful satisfaction beamed in the dark eyes of Estelle, as she imprinted a kiss upon the lips of Ely, and exclaimed—

‘Then, thus I seal the bond between us! The spirits of darkness ratify it, and we shall never part!’

A silence of a few moments followed, when Ely inquired—

‘But how came you here in this disguise? What has happened since I left St. Louis? Tell me all—everything—and I will be equally candid with you.’

Estelle was about to reply, when footsteps were heard in the corridor, and she said, hurriedly—

‘Wait till we can talk without restraint. The jailor comes this way, and at present we must be strangers.’

She had scarcely ceased speaking when an officer made his appearance, and conducted them into the presence of the offi-

cial before whom they were to undergo a preliminary examination. A number of prisoners, of every grade, shade and occupation, were present, but Estelle and Ely had not long to wait for their turn. The former was first called upon, and, as no suspicion of her sex was excited, and no one appeared against her, she was, after a severe reprimand, discharged. Ely was then called forward, and, as he had made a desperate resistance when arrested for being drunk and disorderly, he was fined in a small amount, which Estelle stepped forward and paid, and they left the court together, Estelle leading the way to her rooms in Camp Street.

They arrived there without accident, and found Kate O'Donnell crazy with grief—walking up and down the room hurriedly, and frantically wringing her hands.

‘O, misthress, dear!’ she said, when Estelle entered, ‘where have ye bin at all!’ Then, suddenly checking herself, she glanced at Ely, and whispered in Estelle’s ear, ‘an’ where did ye pick up the loafer?’

‘Silence!’ cried Estelle, angrily, and then, looking significantly at Kate, she continued: ‘You must show this gentleman every respect, Kate. He is not what he seems—he is my husband—do you understand?’

‘Conshumin’ to me iv I do,’ answered Kate, with a puzzled air—‘did he git married since ye went away?’

‘If you wish to remain friends with me,’ answered Estelle, smiling in spite of herself at the comical expression on Kate’s countenance, ‘you will ask no questions, but do as I bid you—some other time I will make everything plain to you, but at present you must smother your astonishment as you best may. You may go to your room now, and when I want you I will call you.’

Kate departed as ordered, but, as she walked through the entry, she muttered—

‘It’s the purty *gintleman*, he is, anyways. Sure I wouldn’t brush me dhirty shoes upon the likes iv him, besides takin

him for a husband—an' it bothers me intirely to think wot the mistress can be about. Sure it's crazy she is, I believe—an' its meself that 'll be after watching the blaguard !'

As soon as Kate was gone and they were once more alone, Estelle redeemed the promise which she had made Ely in the dungeon. She went over every incident of her life from the time that she had last seen him till she met him again, in the manner which has just been described. As her narrative progressed, Ely plainly saw the game which had been played upon them, and a look of deep malignity clouded his brow, as Estelle related the particulars concerning the conversation which she had held with her sister while walking in the garden, and which had been the principal cause of his leaving home. He was also terribly enraged at the recital of Hollowell's marriage and the tragical death of old Mrs. Dunscomb. When Estelle had finished, she called upon her lover for a narrative of his wanderings, and after reflecting a moment, he said—

'In some particulars my history since we parted is not unlike your own. On leaving St. Louis, slighted love, (or what I deemed such,) wounded pride, and bitter disappointment, were raging in my heart, and a feeling of utter recklessness took possession of me. It mattered little to me in which direction I turned my face, so that I placed a long distance between you and myself. So I took passage on board a New Orleans boat, and on the first night of my journey, for the first time in my life, I was in a beastly state of intoxication. I flew to brandy to drown recollection, and while what little money I had lasted, I do not think I once drew a sober breath. At length, however, my means were exhausted, and I found it necessary to seek after some means of gaining a livelihood. While wandering dispiritedly around the streets of New Orleans one day I entered the shipping office of Camp & Co. (the individual whom you mentioned in your narrative as having so justly swindled) and made application for a berth of

some kind on ship-board. I went through a preliminary course of some weeks in the office, when finally I was placed in the capacity of clerk on board a merchantman bound to Barbadoes. She was rather an unseaworthy vessel, and we had been but a few days out when we experienced a series of very severe gales, which strained the old hulk terribly, and finally she went down near Cape Sable on the Florida Coast, with every soul on board except myself and the first mate. It is strange how strong the law of self-preservation is in human nature. Now, I had wished myself dead a thousand times, and had it not been for a lingering hope that I should one day see you again (a hope which, singular as it may appear, has never for a moment entirely forsaken me) I do believe I should have ended my existence by suicide. But when I found the ship going down and saw death staring me in the face, no mortal ever struggled harder for life than I did. When I arose to the surface after the sinking of the ship, I saw many of the crew struggling for life, and, notwithstanding my own danger, my blood curdled with horror as the despairing cry of 'some strong swimmer in his agony' rang in my ears, but I could lend no one assistance as you may well believe. I struck out vigorously for a chicken-coop which I saw floating near me, and was fortunate enough to obtain a secure hold of it. A number of others were not so fortunate. Some three or four grasped at it, but they either missed it or relinquished their old after hanging on for a few moments, and in an hour after the sinking of the ship, not a sign of her nor a human being was visible. I thought at the time that every human soul on board had perished, but I learned afterwards that the first mate was saved, as I have already stated. Not to be tedious, I floated around till well-nigh exhausted, when I was eventually picked up by a trading vessel bound from New York to Vera Cruz, and carried to the latter port. I staid in Vera Cruz for some weeks, and then made my way to Jalappa, in Mexico. Here I obtained a situation as clerk

in a mercantile establishment, and shortly afterwards made the acquaintance of Hortense Dupont, a French girl whose parents had settled in Jalappa some years previously. My meeting with her was the most unfortunate event of my life. She was beautiful, witty, and apparently virtuous and affectionate, and her father who was quite well off, seemed to take a great fancy to me, and encourage my visits. To be brief, I married her. I need not tell you what a struggle that act caused me, for you yourself have suffered in the same way, and know how to pity me. I did not love her, and I married more for the purpose of trying to forget you than any thing else.

‘Things went well enough till some time after a son was born to me, and then an event happened which changed me from a man into a devil. I had long suspected my wife of being too intimate with a fellow clerk of mine who professed for me the greatest friendship, and who was in the habit of visiting us frequently. I did not give expression to my suspicions, but kept a close watch upon their movements, and at length I detected them in their sin. I rushed at my hypocritical friend with all the ferocity of a tiger, and after a severe struggle, during which my guilty wife made her escape, and sought the protection of her father, I killed him upon the spot by driving a clasp-knife up to the hilt in his heart. I was tried for the homicide, and acquitted. I then obtained possession of my child, and set myself to study how I might revenge myself upon its mother. The deep injury which she had done me rankled in my heart, and rendered me perfectly furious. At first I thought of watching an opportunity, and killing her as I did her paramour. It would have been more merciful had I done so, but I gave up the idea because I did not feel willing to place my life in jeopardy for the sake of taking hers. It was a severe blow to her when I deprived her of the child, for although corrupt at heart there can be no question that she loved it. But I was not satisfied with this. I followed her up wherever she went, and kept continually

taunting her with her infidelity. Even into the church I followed her, and proclaimed her shame aloud. I gave her no respite—no rest—and at length she attempted to run away from me. She took passage for New Orleans, but I was informed of the movement by her servant girl, who was in my pay, and secured a passage for myself and the nurse with whom I had placed my babe, on board the same ship. I did not let her see me till the vessel was out at sea, and then I discovered myself to her at the dinner-table, and published her shame aloud to the assembled passengers. She fell upon her knees before me and begged me for the love of Heaven to pity and kill her—but I only laughed at her and spurned her away from me. That night she jumped overboard, and then my insatiable thirst for blood was satisfied, and again I resorted to strong drink to drown reflection. It was only two days after my wife committed suicide that the vessel shipped a heavy sea, and my child's nurse, who was on deck at the time, was washed overboard and lost. The infant was not with her—that was lying asleep in her berth. I arrived in New Orleans about a month ago, and placed my infant under the care of a black woman in Carondelet street. I gave her a sufficient sum for its support for six months to come, and I have not seen her or the child since, for I have been drunk constantly, and have sought my companions amongst the lowest of the low. While crazy with liquor last night I was arrested, and you know the rest.'

'And now,' said Estelle, when Ely had got through with his narrative, 'we are one and inseparable. You have been deeply injured, and so have I. You have been partly revenged, and so have I. We have each imbued our hands in human blood, and having once commenced let us not stop short of revenge full, complete, and direful. Our enemies have made us what we are, and now let them—or all of them who still survive—have cause to tremble at their own creation!'

'I am with you!' exclaimed Ely.

‘Enough!’ returned Estelle, ‘and now the scene of our future operations should be New York—so let us remove there at once. I have sufficient money to last us for some time to come. To-morrow you must provide yourself with suitable clothing for the voyage, obtain your child—of whom Kate shall take charge, and the next day we will engage passage. As we are to travel as man and wife perhaps it would be well for you to take my assumed name. Let us travel as Mr. and Mrs. Graham, child and servant. Does that suit you?’

‘Excellently well,’ was the reply, and the plan thus fixed upon was carried out to the letter, for two weeks afterwards the vicious and depraved pair were located on the upper part of New York city, on the west side.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

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VIRTUOUS love is a great mental alterative—a most efficacious purifier of the heart. After a young man has for years led an aimless, profitless, devil-may-care life—after he has proved the deceit of the world—the folly that brings with it repentance, and the delusive pleasure that is sure to cloy—after he has, in fact, as the saying goes, ‘seen the folly of his ways,’ the undivided attachment of a pure young heart exercises an influence over him which is unbounded in its power for good, and which he cannot fully comprehend, until it forces him to turn his eyes inward upon himself and to witness, in all its glaring deformity, the contrast between his own heart and the heart which he

would make its idol. He then beholds how much more beautiful is virtue than vice, and perceiving, at the same time, the impossibility of their amalgamation, he exerts himself to prune his nature of its grossness, so that the soul beloved may find its counterpart.

This was the case with Robert Barker after his first introduction to Helen Wallace. The love-inspiring glances that darted from her soul-lit eyes of blue, found their way into his heart, and commenced a work of reformation there, which increased with each succeeding day, till his utter disgust for himself which first followed conviction, at last passed away, and peace, tranquil and consolatory, stole into his bosom. It was not without severe trial and tribulation, however, that he reached this point, for black malice was at work against him. The envenomed tongue of slander assailed him—detraction was busy with his fair fame, and the voice of the syren whispered in his ear to lure him back to sin. He had a vindictive and determined enemy in Everard Emory, who, having been unmasked by him and driven in disgrace from his church, had sworn to be revenged, and unceasingly did he follow up his victim—but all without effect, for Barker thwarted his machinations at every turn, and eventually came out of the contest all the purer for being so sorely tried.

And there was one fair member of the church to which he belonged who closely watched (although he knew it not) these struggles of the young convert—one whose eyes sparkled with pleasure, and whose heart pulsated with joy, when he arose among his associates at each new charge brought against him, and conscious of his innocence, with unblenching brow and earnest voice, sifted the testimony, and made plain the malice which lay at the bottom of it. This fair observer was Mary Gardner. Unknown to Barker she had an understanding with her cousin Helen Wallace, with whom she corresponded regularly, and whose happiness was as near her heart as was her own, to watch closely and fairly to report the youth's

conduct. Love, like murder, will out, and Mary knew that Helen had some regard for Barker, and this it was that so delighted her when she saw the latter triumph over his enemies.

About six months had passed away after Robert Barker's first introduction to Helen Wallace, when, as he sat in his study one day after dinner, a ring at the hall-door bell was heard, and shortly afterwards the servant announced that a gentleman calling himself Mr. Ainslie, wished to see him.

'What! my old friend, Jack Ainslie!' exclaimed Barker, in some surprise, 'I wonder what he can want? Show him up, Thomas—I am not particularly busy, and I'd as soon see him here as down stairs.'

The servant departed, and the next moment the good-natured face of Jack was visible at the door of the study.

'Well, Jack, how do you do?' inquired Barker, at the same time shaking the extended hand of the policeman cordially—'it is some time since I saw you last, but you look as hearty as ever'—then slightly altering his tone, he continued in a playful manner, 'I hope you haven't got a warrant for me, have you?'

'Well, no,' muttered Jack, as he threw himself into a chair which Barker proffered, 'I ain't on business just now—that is, my legitimate business, I mean—that is, I don't know but what it may be called legitimate business, too—that is, I—you——' and Jack balanced his hat by the rim, drew a long breath, and was silent.

'Why, what on earth is the matter with the fellow?' cried Barker, laughing—'out with it, Jack, can't you? Don't be afraid—I won't arrest you, although I must say you look as though you had been committing some crime.'

'The fact is,' said Jack, at last, getting rid of the words as fast as possible, as though fearful if he paused to put in a comma he might break down again, 'that I'm going to be married, and I want you to lend me a little assistance.'

‘Is that all?’ inquired Barker, in a merry tone—‘well, I don’t see why you should hesitate so much about telling that—for my part (and here a heavy sigh escaped him) I wish I could say the same thing with truth, and I wouldn’t be long about it. It would be the most joyful truth I ever uttered!’

‘O, yes,’ replied Jack Ainslie, ‘that’s all well enough—it ain’t a very hard thing to be brave when there’s no danger—but I tell you, when marryin’ comes to the pinch it’s a mighty ticklish thing, and if you ever have to go through with it, you’ll find it so. I’ve been teasing and coaxing my Moll to fix the day for the last six months, and now that I’ve got her to do so at last, I feel myself growing more and more trembly every day that brings the affair nearer.’

‘I guess you’ll manage to survive the blow,’ said Barker, again resuming his cheerful tone, ‘but you said something about assistance. How can I assist you? Do you want a check? and if so, for what amount? You can have it.’

‘O, no, Lord bless you,’ said Jack, smiling, ‘I don’t want any sich assistance as that! Thank fortune, I’m all right in the matter of dollars and cents, and if I wasn’t I shouldn’t have to apply to you for a check, for poverty of itself would be check enough to all matrimonial arrangements—I don’t believe in marryin’ with an empty pocket.’

‘Well, then, what is it, Jack?’ questioned Barker, ‘don’t be afraid to ask anything of me which it is in my power to grant. You have acted the part of a friend to me more than once in helping me to expose the schemes of my old associates to ruin me, and I am not ungrateful. Had it not been for your untiring efforts in searching out the real offender, I should more than likely have been indicted for arson.’

‘Very likely—very likely,’ replied Jack, thoughtfully—then after musing a moment he continued, ‘that Emory is a keen one, and no mistake! What a pity it is we could not have traced the plot home to him!’

‘Never mind, Jack,’ said Barker, ‘don’t let us talk about

him now—his ‘sins will find him out’ some day or other—of that rest assured. And now what of this assistance? Come to the point at once!’

‘Well, there was a time,’ replied Jack with diffidence, ‘when I wouldn’t have come to you for sich a thing—there was a time when you held your head pretty high, and would have rolled your eyes around in astonishment if I had asked sich a favor of you as I’m going to ask now—that was when you was a make b’lieve gentleman, of no use to yourself or anybody else—but now that you are a real gentleman and of some account in the world, I ain’t afraid to ask a favor of you. The fact is, I want you to ‘stand up’ with me—to act as my groomsman.’

‘Is that all?’ exclaimed Barker, joyfully, ‘to be sure I will, Jack, and thank you too. Why, I’m in luck! It is only three days since, that I received an invitation to be present at the marriage of Minnie Jay, who is to become Mrs. Richard Hamilton this very night, and now here I have an invitation to act as groomsman! When does your interesting affair come off?’

‘Well, you see,’ answered Jack, ‘I’m almost ashamed to tell you, for it’s rather a short notice to give you, but the fact is girls will be girls, and that’s the only excuse I can make. The whole long and short of the matter is this. Yesterday my Moll called upon Minnie to see how she was getting on, and as a matter of course all their conversation was about the two fast approaching events. In the course of their conversation, Minnie happened to remark what a glorious thing a double wedding would be—it would be so interesting! and they would have so much more confidence to go through with it! and it would save so much trouble both to be married at the same time! And so, to be short about it, the double wedding takes place to-night at the house of Minnie Jay.’

‘Excellent!’ exclaimed Barker, delightedly, ‘excellent! I think the ladies are quite right!’ Then, as a look of anxiety settled upon his features, he enquired tremulously, ‘what young ladies are to act as your bride’s friends on the occasion?’

‘There it is again, you see,’ replied Jack, and a mischievous look sparkled in his merry eye as he spoke, ‘the thing was so sudden that we hadn’t time to complete all our arrangements. Moll did intend that her cousin Helen should be one of her bridesmaids, but it would be impossible for her to get here in time now, and the wedding must come off anyhow—there’s no help for it.’

Robert Barker sighed heavily, but he soon shook off the gloom which oppressed him, and replied gaily—

‘Well, Jack, I am free to confess I should have liked it better had you told me that Miss Wallace was to be of the party, but under any circumstances I shall be only too happy to witness your union with I honestly believe one of the best young ladies in the whole world—so you may expect me to-night without fail. At what hour does the ceremony take place?’

‘At 9 o’clock,’ answered Jack.

‘Then I shall be there at about 8,’ said Barker.

‘Yes, that will be about the right hour,’ returned Jack Ainslie, as he put on his hat, preparatory to his departure. ‘Good day, Mr. Barker; I know you will be delighted with the ceremony; it will be the happiest wedding that ever you attended, I promise you. Good bye.’

‘Good bye,’ answered Barker, and Jack departed.

When he was gone, Barker dropped into a chair, and after a few moments’ reflection, he muttered mournfully to himself—

‘It would gratify me to gaze upon her angelic face once again, and to listen to the rich music of her heart-thrilling tones! Helen—*dear* Helen! O, ’tis sweet to think of thee, and to pronounce thy dear name, even though we are divided by distance, and may never meet again! It is sweet to reflect that even though you blame, you do not utterly condemn me; and O, how gratifying to my heart is the thought that, although I may never call thee mine, I may, at least, become more worthy of thy love—taught by the language of thy virtue-in-

spiring eyes to exchange the dross of vice for the pure gold of virtue !'

The day passed wearily with him ; for he could not shake off the loneliness which oppressed him at the thought that he was to take part in a marriage ceremony, without the idol of his heart being present, in the room where he had first beheld her.

As the hour of 8 approached, he took his way to Minnie Jay's residence ; and when he arrived there, an interesting and joyous scene presented itself. A party of young ladies and gentlemen had assembled, and were gathered in small groups around the different candidates for matrimonial felicity, and ever and anon, as some witty allusion or facetious remark (which, under less exciting circumstances, would perhaps have passed without notice) dropped from one of them, a peal of uproarious mirth would break forth. Barker tried to enter fairly into the spirit of the thing, and though actually sad at heart, he so far succeeded in conquering his feelings as to avoid imparting any degree of his own gloom to the happy party. The hour of 9 approached, and everybody save the minister and one of Mary Gardener's bridesmaids was present. Their backwardness was just about being made the theme of general comment, when, as the clock upon the mantel-piece struck the hour appointed, a carriage rolled up to the door, and the minister's arrival was announced. The only person whose presence the company now lacked, was the bridesmaid before alluded to. She was to be Barker's partner on the occasion, and Mary Gardener had told him that she was finishing her toilet in another part of the house, and would soon make her appearance ; and scarcely had she imparted this piece of information, when the door opened, and Helen Wallace, radiant with beauty, entered the room. O, how wildly the heart of Barker throbbed ! how swiftly the blood coursed along his veins ! and how violently his hand trembled, as she

approached him, with pleasure beaming in her eyes, and gracefully placed her slender, delicate fingers within his!

‘It is long since we last met, Mr. Barker,’ she said, in her soft, flute-like voice, ‘and our acquaintance could not possibly have been renewed upon a more happy occasion than this.’

‘The time has indeed seemed long to me since I saw you last,’ answered Barker, in an under tone, ‘and it only needed your presence to render this scene the happiest one to me in which I have ever participated. Your appearance here fills me with a joy which is more complete because it was entirely unlooked-for.’

Helen blushed deeply as she replied, in a playful tone—

‘It was my fault that you were kept in ignorance of my intention to be present. I so ordered it. You will remember that I told you I might come upon you when you least expected it; and you will forgive me, I am sure.’

‘O, you have rendered me too happy!’ exclaimed Barker, whose joy, so perfect and so unexpected, almost overpowered him.

Just then Jack Ainslie approached them, and mischievously glancing from one to the other, he whispered in the ear of Barker—

‘Didn’t I tell you this would be a happy wedding, eh?’

‘Yes, but you deceived me, notwithstanding,’ replied Barker, smiling.

‘Very true,’ returned Jack Ainslie, ‘but I didn’t go away from the truth to do it. I told you it would be impossible to get Helen here at such short notice; and so it would have been; but, fortunately, it happened that she was here already.’

This conversation was cut short by the minister, who, rising from his seat, reminded the parties that the hour fixed upon for the ceremony to be performed had passed by, and that his time was somewhat limited.

The hint was sufficient, and immediately the members of the bridal group took their positions upon the floor, and the im-

pressive service was at once gone through with in a solemn and dignified manner. The concluding prayer and benediction having been pronounced, the ceremony of kissing the bride commenced, and then great was the hilarity and mirth that for a time prevailed. Such scuffling, and chasing about, and kissing the lady guests instead of the bride (all in mistake, *of course*) was never seen before, while Jack Ainslie was so much at his ease, and so glad that the difficulty was over, that he kissed everybody in the room, including the men, executed a perfectly original polka, and would have ended by standing upon his head in one corner of the room, had he not been called to order by Richard Hamilton, the other bridegroom, who took exceptions to his monopolizing all the fun, and insisted upon getting up a country dance in which all might join.

There were two persons in the room who did not seem disposed to take a part in the wild merriment which for a time reigned supreme. These were Helen Wallace and Robert Barker. As soon as the marriage ceremony was over, they seated themselves in an out-of-the-way corner, and were soon engaged in a very interesting conversation.

‘May I now hope, Miss Wallace,’ said Barker, with earnestness, ‘to find some slight favor in your eyes? May I venture to trust that we shall meet again before so extended a period as six months shall have dragged its slow length along?’

Helen was silent for some moments, but at length she answered—

‘I am satisfied that you are not what you was—that you have striven hard, against fearful odds, for the purification of the spirit, and that you have for the time being triumphed, but, ‘the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked,’ and the tempter may again find you. I will not deny that your noble efforts to throw off the yoke of Satan have awakened my admiration and esteem, but I must have assurance that this hopeful disposition will remain permanent and

unshaken always before I can consent to give you my undivided friendship.'

'And may I not hope,' asked Barker, with deep fervor, 'when my probation, according to your view, shall have ended, for something *more* than friendship? May I not then mention *love*? O, forgive my apparent boldness, Miss Wallace, but my full heart must unburden itself even at the risk of your displeasure. I have wished for, prayed for this meeting, Heaven only knows how ardently. If you did but know how I have endeavored by a life of penitence to cancel the errors of the past—how I have struggled for a position in the moral world from which I might address you without shame—you would pity me! From the first moment that I beheld you, I have not indulged in a thought which was not in some way connected with you, and if you doom me now to blank despair, how can I hope for strength to struggle again? Say, may I not eventually claim this hand as the reward of my heart struggles?'

'Force me not into making a direct answer now,' replied Helen, with emotion, at the same time disengaging her hand, which Barker had taken in his; 'at some future time we shall meet again, and then perhaps I may say what I dare not trust my lips to utter.'

Their conversation was here interrupted by Minnie, who came to call them to supper, and Barker did not again during the evening gain an opportunity to address her on the subject so near his heart. He had no cause to despond, however, for he was not slow to discover that he had made an impression upon Helen's heart, and this filled his bosom with hope.

At length the supper was over—the guests one by one began to depart—and at about 12 o'clock Robert Barker left, and took his way homeward a happier man than he had ever been before in his life. He forgot the past, and the future lay bright before him. Already in imagination he stood at the altar with Helen Wallace for a bride, and his heart was gay,

and his footstep light, as he hurriedly walked along through the deserted streets. It was a dark night—not a star was visible in the firmament, and before he had walked half the distance homeward, a fine, drizzling rain began to descend, but he heeded it not—he felt it not—right onward he went, humming, in the exuberance of his spirits, a merry tune, and never dreaming of discomfort or danger. His course lay through Hudson street, and he had well-nigh reached home, when, just as he was passing underneath an awning, a man suddenly sprang upon him from the deep porch of a store door, and with one well-directed blow upon the back of the head with a slung-shot, stretched him at full length upon the sidewalk, and fled, leaving him senseless and weltering in his blood.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

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ESTELLE's first desire upon reaching New York again, was to regain possession of her infant, and then to learn something of her relatives. The first was easy enough of accomplishment, for her hand-writing and a knowledge of all the circumstances under which Mrs. Gardener received the child, would, she was confident, convince that lady of her rightful claim to it. With regard to her relatives, however, she did not know exactly how to proceed; but she resolved to secure the child first, and trust to luck for the rest. Accordingly, on the third day after her arrival, she dressed herself in deep mourning, taking care to alter her appearance as much as possible, and then at about 10 o'clock in the forenoon she procured a car-

riage, and directing the hackman where to drive, she took her seat, and in a short time found herself at the door of Mrs. Gardener's residence. The old lady received her very kindly, and having ascertained her business, she at first fully satisfied herself that Estelle was the person she represented herself to be, and then informed her where the child was, and promised to send for it at once. Mrs. Gardener was not naturally an inquisitive woman, but she did have a great desire to ascertain something of the little stranger's history. She saw, however, that Estelle was not at all inclined to converse upon the subject, so she checked her curiosity, and a few days afterwards she parted with the child (having received it from her sister, to whom she had written immediately) with no further knowledge of its history than when she first received it.

In the meantime James Ely and Kate O'Donnell (who had by the way come to be excellent friends) were not idle in endeavoring to procure the information concerning Estelle's relatives, which she was so anxious to gain. Sometimes they went together, Kate always assuming the male attire, which she had learned to wear with as much ease as though she had been bred to it; and sometimes they took different directions, frequenting every place of popular resort in the city. Kate would have had no difficulty in finding out the whereabouts of Emory, for she knew he was to be seen almost any day in Wall street, but she did not know how to approach him safely, and she preferred getting hold of his man Cantwell. This she found impossible, however, for although she was untiring in her vigilance, she could never manage to catch sight of him.

One night about two weeks after his arrival in New York, James Ely dropped in at a well-known gambling crib, which at that time was kept in Ann street, and which he was in the habit of visiting occasionally, and after looking around the room a while, began betting lightly on a game of faro. He had made but a few bets when suddenly he was started by the sound of a voice which he thought was familiar to him

and looking up he was not more surprised than rejoiced to recognise in a new applicant for favors from the blind goddess no less an individual than Mr. Cornelius Hollowell. He was very well disguised, and Ely would not have recognised him had he not at first caught the sound of his voice. He had divested himself of both beard and moustaches, and wore a wig of rich flowing curls, which hung in luxuriant clusters around his neck, giving him a very youthful and somewhat verdant appearance, and he strove hard to create the impression that he was rather *green* than otherwise.

‘I don’t believe I’d ever win anything at this game,’ he said; ‘not if I was to play at it till I was grey-headed. There it goes again,’ he continued, as the banker swept his checks from the board. ‘I haven’t won a bet to-night and I don’t expect to at faro. I wish somebody ’d open a little game of bluff—I don’t know much about playing, but I’d like to have a little amusement before I go home. Who’ll take a hand?’ and he looked around at the assembled gamesters.

Ely was but a mere boy when Hollowell had last seen him, and more than two years of dissipation and hardship had wrought a great change in his appearance. He felt pretty well satisfied that he would escape recognition, and he determined at all events to try it, so he exclaimed, in a careless off-hand manner—

‘I don’t care if I take a chance in for a little while—I’ll make one.’

‘Who else ’ll go in?’ asked Hollowell, winking at the same time at a sinister-looking individual on the other side of the table, and following up the wink by asking, ‘will you take a hand, sir?’

‘Well, I don’t care if I do,’ was the reply; ‘I’ve got about ten or fifteen that I’d as leave lose as not.’

‘That’s three of us,’ exclaimed Hollowell, ‘now who’ll make the fourth one?’

‘Well,’ answered a coarse-featured, red-haired man, ‘I’ll

take a hand just to make up the party. I don't want to play but I hate to see a three-handed game of bluff, 'cos that ain't no game at all, that ain't.'

'Well, then, the party's made up,' said Hollowell, 'so come along—fetch on the cards!' and as the man of the sinister countenance passed Hollowell to take his seat at the table, the latter whispered in his ear the mysterious sentence—

'Open and shut, and an equal dividend, eh?'

'Yes, that's the tanzy!' was the equally mysterious rejoinder, and shortly afterwards the players were seated, the cards were dealt, and the game commenced.

Ely noticed the mysterious whispering between Hollowell and the man whom he had invited to join in the game, and he knew that they were in league together, but this made not the slightest difference to him, for however much money might pass from his pocket into that of Hollowell, he determined that it should find its way back again, and he had another object besides dollars and cents in joining the game. So he wagered his money quite recklessly, as did also the man with the sinister countenance, and all the cash on the table seemed to flow in one steady stream into Hollowell's pile—the red-haired man only occasionally winning a 'pot,' at every repetition of which piece of good fortune, instead of thanking his lucky stars, he would swear terribly, and call down upon himself all sorts of horrid maledictions.

After the game had progressed about half-an-hour, Ely stopped suddenly and quietly enquired—

'How do you play in this house? Can an individual bluff as high as he likes, or do you give a man a 'sight,' for his money?'

'Why,' replied Hollowell, blandly, 'if a man hasn't money enough to call a bet he must lose—that's the game of bluff—at least that's the game I play—as a matter of courtsey, it's well enough to give a friend a 'sight' sometimes, but not as a general thing. I don't pretend to say that I'm correct, how-

ever,' he added innocently, 'for I don't know anything about the game more than what I've picked up from playing occasionally.'

'Well, I merely wanted to know,' said Ely, carelessly, and the game proceeded.

A few more hands were played, when significant glances passed between Hollowell and the man of the sinister countenance. Hollowell had the deal, and when Ely raised his cards, he found that he held a tremendous hand, but he was satisfied at the same time that the dealer held a better one. He now concluded that the proper time had arrived for him to carry out the plan which he had formed on taking his seat at the table, which was to get Hollowell to accompany him outside on some pretence or other, so assuming an anxious air he laid his cards upon the table, face down, and bringing forth his wallet, he examined his contents, after which he said in a nervous manner—

'Now I have a hand which I would be willing to bet considerable money on, but unfortunately I have very little by me. I do not live far from here, however, and if you will allow me to play my hand for what it is worth, you can accompany me home if I lose, and I will give you a check for the amount.'

'Well, I always like to play a liberal game,' replied Hollowell, whose greedy eyes lighted up in anticipation of fingering a large pile (for he had stocked the cards and knew that he had the best hand) 'and I won't take advantage of you because you don't happen to have your money with you. So go ahead—you can bet as high as you like, and to give you a chance, I will go fifty dollars over your last bet.'

The other two players had retired from the contest, which was left between Hollowell and Ely, and at each other they went furiously. The bets had increased to about a thousand dollars, when eventually Ely 'called' his opponent, who

showed up four aces against four kings, as Ely had expected, and won.

‘It is the fortune of war,’ remarked Ely, affecting a heavy sigh, ‘and can’t be helped, so, if you will now go with me to my residence, I will settle with you, at once.’

‘Very good,’ cried Hollowell, starting up instantly, ‘I am with you.’

They sallied forth, and as they walked along, Hollowell, elated with the success of the villainous game which he had been playing, was very loquacious, and tried to make himself as agreeable as possible.

‘I think I’ve seen you before, somewhere,’ he said to Ely; ‘your face looks somewhat, familiar to me.’

‘Very likely,’ was the quiet reply, ‘for I’ve travelled around considerable in my time, and I’m pretty certain that I’ve seen you somewhere.’

‘It would be very strange if you hadn’t,’ said Hollowell, jocularly, ‘everybody has seen me—I can’t walk through the streets without seeing somebody I know at every step; we political characters are so prominent!’

‘Oh, then you are a politician,’ observed Ely smiling at the cool impudence of the sharper.

‘I should think I was,’ replied Hollowell, ‘been twice in the Legislature and should have been sent to Congress, but for the perfidy of some of my pretended friends—fetch it next time, though, *sure!* Ah, Colonel!’ he exclaimed, nodding at the same time familiarly to an elderly, grave looking gentleman, who happened to pass, but who did not pay the slightest attention to the salutation—‘that’s Colonel Gruffy,’ he continued—‘the Colonel’s an immense man, and if he’d have taken my advice at the last election he would not only have been in nomination for Governor of this State, but would have been elected, too; yes, *sir!* If he had listened to me, he would now have occupied the Gubernatorial chair. However, he’ll know better next time.’

And thus he went on, bowing as he passed along to about every second person he met, and they were all Generals, Colonels, Captains, Lieutenants, Govenors or Senators. They were all, he said, extremely popular with the people, but, however, that may have been, it is very certain that he was not very popular with them, for they each and every one of them frowned angrily upon him, and evidently regarded his conduct as highly impertinent.

They reached the house at last, and as Ely had a latch-key, he did not stop to ring, but entered at once, and led the way into the parlor.

‘Please be seated,’ he said, ‘and wait for a moment—my wife has the key of my desk, and I will return directly.’

He left the room, and when Hollowell found himself alone, he began to scrutinize the apartment.

‘Very nice, very tasty, decidedly handsome,’ he soliloquised—‘only another evidence of the fact that appearances are deceitful. Now, I didn’t dream that I was going to make so much out of that fellow; he don’t look such an easy bird to pluck; but he is though, and there’s no knowing to what amount he will be willing to suffer before I’ve done with him. Very likely I may succeed in persuading him to part with this elegant establishment. Who knows? Stranger things have happened. I’ll just take a look around, and see——. The devil!’ he exclaimed, as he arose to examine an oil painting, which hung directly over the door, and beheld the countenance of Estelle quietly looking in upon him.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

HOLLOWELL was struck dumb with surprise at the sudden appearance of Estelle, and at first was almost inclined to believe that he was laboring under some singular hallucination. After he had rubbed his eyes once or twice, however, and approached close to the object which had so unceremoniously presented itself to his startled gaze, he became satisfied that it was no apparition, but real flesh and blood, and immediately that impudent self-assurance which seldom deserted him, returned, and staring at Estelle steadily through his eye glass, he uttered a long whistle expressive of his surprise, and then striking a theatrical attitude, he remarked in a serio-comic tone—

‘Can it be possible that I do once again behold thee, or am I the victim of some tantalizing chimera? As Macbeth says, ‘My eyes are made the fools o’ the other senses, or else worth all these rest.’ It cannot be! and yet there is no doubt about it! I never, surely, could mistake that meek, forgiving countenance, and those mild, gentle eyes! It is!—no it isn’t!—and yet it is!—there can be no mistake about it—it is—my long-lost sister-in-law! O, come to my embrace! Let a brother’s arms enfold thee!’

He sprang towards her, with a ludicrous gesture, as he finished speaking, but she met him with a blow on the cheek with the flat of her hand which made everything ring again, and caused his face to tingle with pain—

‘Take that, you senseless monkey!’ she exclaimed, in a tone of rage—‘I should suppose that instead of playing the clown you would at such a moment as this fall upon your knees and sue for pardon!’

‘Sister mine,’ replied Hollowell, with the most unblushing effrontery, ‘you are rough—decidedly unfeminine—contact with the world has not tended to soften your nature in the slightest degree—I am sorry for it—I don’t see how I can do anything for you unless you alter—I can’t patronize you unless you show some signs of amendment, and that speedily. How are you off in this world’s goods? I know you are full of spiritual wealth—your account with Heaven no doubt shows a handsome balance in your favor—but how are you off with regard to the mundane—the filthy—the collateral? Is this your establishment?’ and he looked around the room as though taking an inventory of the furniture.

Estelle’s bosom swelled with rage and indignation, as she listened to the sarcastic language of the unprincipled adventurer. The expressions concerning her piety which he let fall convinced her that he was fully cognizant of her guilty conduct previous to her flight from her husband, and when she reflected that Hollowell himself was partly instrumental in causing her fall by assisting in the plot against her, she felt that she could, without the slightest compunction, murder him where he stood if she had the power to do so, and glaring furiously upon him, she replied—

‘I understand your sarcastic allusions, you worse than the devil, but if I am steeped to the lips in sin, who made me what I am? Did not you among others, conspire to rob me of my heart’s peace, and drive me to distraction? Did you not plot and contrive, and scheme, with a subtlety and malignity worthy

the arch fiend, to destroy the love and corrupt the purity of two youthful hearts? and now how dare you make the base act the theme of caustic sarcasm? *You*, who are even more criminal than I am, and with less excuse?

‘Crime is an unpleasant subject, and I don’t like to talk about it,’ said Hollowell, slightly cowering beneath the intensity of her gaze—‘as far as the little short-comings to which human nature is prone are concerned, I am willing to admit that we are, to use a homely phrase, ‘tarred with the same stick’—so don’t let’s say any more about it—but tell me, how have you made out since I saw you last? Have you managed to save a pile? Who is that young fellow I came here with? Are you and him in partnership? I am interested in asking, because I just managed to bluff him out of a thousand, and I want to know if he is good for it.’

‘Shall I tell you what I am half-resolved to do?’ asked Estelle, as her lip quivered with passionate emotion.

‘Well, yes,’ answered Hollowell, ‘I’d as leave you would as not. I won’t refuse my advice, although you don’t seem very well disposed towards me. What is it?’

‘You know I am not apt to say a thing without meaning it,’ continued Estelle, ‘and I have half a mind to send for a policeman, and give myself up for the satisfaction of having you arrested and brought to trial.’

‘Have you only half a mind to that effect?’ said Hollowell, with nervous anxiety, but still maintaining his tone of pleasantry—‘then please keep the other half back till some more fitting occasion—in the meantime, since you and the green one who conducted me hither, are in cahoot, I won’t trouble him for the thousand I beat him out of, but let it go to the score of old acquaintance, and now, I think I’ll take my departure. But before I go, tell me, have you ever seen anything of that crazy lover of yours—that Ely? When I was in St. Louis, not long since, (I just passed through that way for a ‘flyer,’) I heard he was dead—it was rumored there that he had been

drowned at sea, and the old captain, his father, took it so much to heart that he died in consequence. I wouldn't have mentioned the painful subject, had it not suddenly occurred to me that your new lover resembled him somewhat. I always dreaded him amazingly. He looked to me as if he had 'kill' in his eye, and I never wanted to meet him after the match between you and him was broken up. Did you ever learn any of the particulars of his death ?

'No,' replied Estelle, and a malicious smile of satisfaction lighted up her dark eyes as she spoke, 'I never did learn the particulars of his death, although I, too, heard that he had been drowned at sea.'

'Poor fellow !' exclaimed Hollowell, in a tone of mock solemnity, 'what a pity ! So young, and so promising, too ! Well, 'in the midst of life we are in death.' We must all go at one time or another, and we should try and be prepared ! Good evening, sister Emory. I wish you and your new partner every success, and if you try to deserve my friendship, I may, perhaps, if you get very hard up, endeavor to assist you. Good evening.'

He started towards the door, but Estelle stepped in front of him, and barring the passage, she said, in a determined voice—

'We part not so. I have been looking for you anxiously for some days past, and now that I have found you, I require certain information from you touching my family before we part.'

'Sorry to say I can't give you the slightest intelligence concerning them,' said Hollowell, coolly. 'I have always tried to give them as wide a berth as possible, and I don't know anything about them, and what is more, I wouldn't if I could.'

Hollowell was never idle in calculating the chances of making something, and the moment Estelle discovered herself to him, he began to figure up in his own mind the probable

amount which Everard Emory would pay for a knowledge of her whereabouts, and he had determined to make the best bargain he could. It was his intention to put the information which he had so suddenly and so unexpectedly obtained, in the market, and if he could get more for it from Emory than he could from his fortune-telling partners in iniquity, then he resolved to turn traitor—sell the secret and his companions at the same time—get possession of the price of his perfidy, and decamp at once. All this had passed through his mind in a moment, and so he had determined to plead ignorance. But he had a shrewder party to deal with than he had calculated upon. Estelle was not to be put off so easily. So she maintained the position which she had assumed, and replied quietly in answer to his professed ignorance—

‘That story might do very well, Mr. Cornelius Hollowell, to pass off upon one not intimately acquainted with you, but you cannot hope to deceive me with any such weak subterfuge. I know you and you know me. I must have what information you possess before you leave these premises.’

‘What if I admit,’ said Hollowell coolly, ‘that I can gratify you if I please, and still refuse to do it?’

‘Then I must force you into compliance,’ was the laconic and determined reply.

‘Well, come, I like *that*!’ said Hollowell, with a laugh—then suddenly inserting his hand into the inside pocket of his coat, he drew forth a pistol, deliberately cocked it, and assuming a fierce expression of countenance, he continued—‘stand aside—I have no occasion to draw a pistol upon you, but you are doubtless not without help in the house, and I may need the weapon. It is needless for me to assure you that he who attempts to stop my progress is a dead man, for you know I will shoot. You are aware that I was led into such an act once before, and the result was fatal, though not to the person shot at. This time, I will venture to say no such mistake will be made, for besides being rather a better

marksman than formerly I have acquired a steadiness of nerve which in all such little matters aids me exceedingly. So stand aside I say ! Who now will dare to stop me ?'

Estelle stood in the door-way opening into the hall, and Hollowell stood facing her with his back towards the folding door separating the front and back rooms. While they were conversing, James Ely, armed with a pistol, entered noiselessly by the folding door, and approaching Hollowell cautiously from behind, stood directly at his back, just as the enquiry 'who now will dare to stop me ?' in a furious and defiant tone, left his lips.

'I will !' he exclaimed, as he suddenly wrenched the elevated weapon from the sharper's hand, and at the same time levelled his own pistol full at the dupe's head—'I ! James Ely ! Once the victim of your hellish plotting, but now your master !'

Hollowell was fairly paralyzed with apprehension and surprise, and for a moment he trembled like an aspen leaf, but soon recovering his usual presence of mind, he assumed the air of *nonchalance* so natural to him, and with admirable *sang froid* exclaimed—

'Why, Jimmy my boy, is that you ? Well, who'd have thought it ? I certainly imagined that you had 'shuffled off this mortal coil.' I was under the impression that you were playing 'hide and seek,' or 'blind man's buff' or some such innocent game, with the sea nymphs at the bottom of the ocean—but for that I suppose I should have recognized you at the bluff table, although you look about ten years older than when I saw you last ! Come, give us your hand.'

Ely still kept the pistol levelled at his head, and with steady nerve and eyes flashing fire, he exclaimed—

'Dare to use the slightest resistance, or make the least effort to escape from this house till I am through with you, and your life is not worth a moment's purchase ! You are fairly caught, and any effort to get away till we are disposed to let you go

would be in vain. Every door is locked and barred, and I have assistance at hand if it is necessary to call for it. So you may as well yield at once.'

'I see you've got the best of me,' said Hollowell, submissively, 'and it would be nonsense for me to attempt to play my hand out when you have the game secured—so I back down, and now what do you want with me?'

'Nothing but what you can easily and ought readily to grant,' answered Ely, 'for as you once operated against us without reason, so you ought now in atonement help us to revenge. I am satisfied you know all about Emory and the rest of our *friends*, and all I ask is that you give us such information as will enable us to approach them without being known. In return for such a concession on your part, I promise you most solemnly that we will not only not interfere with any plans which you may have formed, or any game you may be playing, but on the contrary will endeavor to assist to the best of our ability—will we not, Estelle?' he asked, addressing his guilty partner.

'Yes,' she answered, 'but if he refuses to do so, may every ill luck in the catalogue of misfortune befall me, if I do not denounce him to the authorities, even though by that act I bring my own neck into the halter. I have nothing but revenge to live for—deprived of that, I wish to die, for life is valueless to me.'

Hollowell meditated a while, and at length replied—

'I suppose I might as well come to the point. I don't know but what it will pay about as well in the long run to go in with you, as it will to operate on my own hook. At all events it is safer, and it's better to make friends of enemies than to trust to luck to escape their vengeance. So I will admit without further talk that I *do* know all about Emory and the rest. I know every circumstance that has transpired since you left home, and I know some things that are to transpire. Now, how shall I begin? What shall I tell you first?'

‘In the first place,’ asked Estelle, ‘what has become of my father? I merely ask for information, and not because I care a great deal, for I have not a superabundance of affection for him.’

‘It won’t take long to answer that question,’ replied Hollowell; ‘as near as I could find out, your amiable husband first starved and abused him into idiocy, and then sent him to the alms-house.’

‘A just punishment,’ said Estelle, callously, ‘for the unnatural parent, who for the sake of gain would barter the eternal peace of his own child! but that does not make the crime of Emory in persecuting him any the less heinous. The rotten-hearted miscreant! O, for some plan to insure his ruin!—some subtle contrivance to bring about his death by degrees! Dissolution slow and in lingering torments is the only fit way for him to leave this world! What of him?’ she continued enquiringly, ‘what of Emory, the stony-hearted beast? Does he still seek for his child?’

‘Yes,’ replied Hollowell, ‘and he would give half of what he’s worth to gain possession of it. But to save time, I may as well tell you the whole story. The fact is then, that after Emory had sent the old man to the Alms House, he turned your sister Florence (my dear wife, you know) out of doors to shift for herself. Of course, you know that Fanny died of the poisoned wine you left for Emory?’

He paused, and looked significantly at Estelle, as much as to say ‘you see I am well posted up in all the particulars.’

‘Yes, yes,’ replied Estelle, impatiently, ‘go on.’

‘Well,’ continued Hollowell, ‘she (Florence) went to the city, where Cantwell, the confidential clerk of Emory, followed her, and proposed to her to start in the business of fortune telling. She was glad to jump at almost anything, and accepted at once. After they had started business, Cantwell, who hates Emory with a deadly hatred, contrived it so that he was induced to make application to Florence, who goes by

the name of Madame Duroc, for intelligence concerning you and his infant. Of course, Florence, knowing all about him, had a nice, easy thing of it, and was enabled to fool him to her heart's content. It was just as they had brought him fairly into the traces, that I accidentally stumbled upon the party, and forced them to take me as a partner in the concern, and a nice, profitable and pleasant time we have had of it thus far, I do assure you. Emory bleeds freely, and hasn't the slightest suspicion of the trick of which he is the victim. He attributes the power possessed by Florence to psychology, clairvoyance, or something of that kind, and religiously believes that she will eventually restore to him his child, though of course she is as far from doing it as ever. I didn't dream that Emory could have been so completely fooled!' and Hollowell chuckled with delight as he ended his narrative.

'He shall have his child,' said Estelle, smiling savagely—then after thinking a moment she continued—'can you fetch my sister Florence here at once, Hollowell? If you can, do so. You need not hesitate to give her the full particulars of this interview. We are embarked in a common cause, and I entertain no enmity towards her now.'

'I think I can have her here in the course of an hour,' answered Hollowell.

'Then I wish you would do so,' said Estelle, 'I have a project in view which I think will pay well, and the sooner we get to work upon it the better.'

Hollowell departed, and after he was gone, Estelle said, addressing Ely—

'You don't think any great deal of your infant, do you, James?'

'No,' was the heartless answer, 'I never should have brought it here, had you not requested it.'

'Then you would willingly part with it for the sake of insuring me revenge?'

‘You don’t want to hurt it, do you?’ said Ely, as a touch of pity was awakened for the moment in his bosom.

‘No, no,’ replied Estelle, with a smile, ‘I merely want it brought up handsomely upon *his* money—I want him to lavish his wealth and his affections upon it till the proper time comes to open his eyes to the fact that he has bestowed his care and attention upon my lover’s child instead of his own.’

‘And will he not be able to recognize the infant, think you?’ questioned Ely.

‘O, no,’ replied Estelle, ‘impossible—the child was but a few weeks old when I left home. Besides they look very much alike—both have black eyes, and they are nearly of the same age. I can give a certificate over my own signature declaring the infant to be his own, and they can tell him that I am dead, and that they are sworn to secrecy concerning the circumstances attending my decease. This will give the whole affair a mysterious complexion which will induce him the more readily to swallow the story.’

‘And your own infant,’ questioned Ely, ‘what disposition do you propose making of that?’

‘O, I have thought of a fitting way to dispose of that,’ answered Estelle, with a fiendish look, ‘that shall be well brought up too. It shall be an honor to its father, never fear. Kate has her instructions already concerning it.’

While the unprincipled couple were thus conversing, Hollowell was on his way to the ‘Palace of Mystery.’ He had forgotten all about the gambling transaction in the excitement which followed the scene which has just been described, and as he walked along, he muttered—

‘Strange things do happen in this world, and no mistake! Now who’d ever thought of meeting that couple at such a time and under such circumstances? I wonder what they intend to do? But what’s that to me, so long as I make a good thing of it? I never stop to ask any questions—all I want is money, and it don’t make much odds to me how I get it.’

He was startled from his reflections by a tap on the shoulder, and looking up who should he behold but the man of the sinister countenance—his late partner in the game of bluff.

‘Did you think you was goin’ to get clear of me?’ questioned that worthy, with a suspicious expression of countenance. ‘Wasn’t the conditions open and shut, and an equal ‘div’ between three of us? and now you want to slide with the pile, eh? P’int!’ and he held-out his right hand with the palm upwards, and agitated the digits thereof violently, expressive of his desire to finger his share of the money.

Hollowell was about to reply to him, when he was startled by a voice on the other side of him, proceeding from the red-haired and coarse-featured man, who exclaimed—

‘Yes, take and look-a-here! P’int! I ain’t *win* anything these three nights, and I’m broke—and I ain’t a-goin’ to ‘low no sich sucker as you to get the best o’ me! D’yer know that? P’int, or I’ll take and split yer nose! D’yer know that, s-a-y?’ And, as an earnest that he meant what he said, the red-haired and coarse-featured man brought his heavy hand down forcibly upon the crown of Hollowell’s hat, fetching the article from its proper position on the top of the head down over his eyes, nose and mouth.

‘Gentlemen,’ he exclaimed, when he was able to articulate, ‘don’t be violent. It’s all right, and I’ll be fair with you, but have patience. The man hasn’t paid me yet.’

‘O, wind!’ exclaimed the red-haired man, contemptuously—‘here we’ve bin a-playin’ in pocket for the last three weeks and you’ve bin takin’ your sheer, and now, when you’ve made a big raise, you want to pass onto us—but you ain’t a-goin’ to, d’yer know that? P’int! or I’ll take and break yer eye!’

‘Come, old fel.,’ said the man of the sinister countenance, persuasively, ‘there’s no use a torkin’—you might as well p’int fust as last, for you’ve got to do it.’

‘Gentlemen,’ said Hollowell, earnestly, ‘you are welcome to what money I’ve got about me, which amounts to a few

hundreds only. The thousand dollars I did not get, and if you don't believe me you can search me.'

They did search him, but found no more upon him than what he had acknowledged to, whereat they were exceedingly wroth and somewhat disappointed. Especially was this the case with the red-haired man, who, when he found he was not likely to get his full share of the stealings, applied his thumb and fore-finger to the nose of Hollowell, and twisted that unfortunate member so violently, that for an instant its possessor was somewhat in doubt as to whether it still remained a portion of his countenance or not. After he had thus, in a measure, satisfied his outraged feelings, he addressed the object of his wrath as follows—

'Now take and go—and if ever you 'tempt to play open and shut with me agin, do you know what I'll take and do with you? I'll take and bust yer head! D'yer know that?' and giving Hollowell a parting kick, as if to impress what he said more forcibly upon him, he told the man of the sinister countenance to 'come along, and let the d—d sucker go,' and they passed on.

The fire of malice sparkled in the eyes of Hollowell, and his hand sought the handle of his pistol in the breast-pocket of his coat, but it was not there. He had forgotten the fact that he had left it lying on the floor in Estelle's apartments, and merely muttering, 'Perhaps it's better as it is,' he passed on, and soon reached Florence's house. He rang the bell, which was shortly answered by the negro page Paul, of whom he enquired if there was any customer up-stairs?

'Yes, massa,' answered Paul, 'massa Emory up dar.'

'That's fortunate,' muttered Hollowell to himself; then addressing the negro, he said, 'I must see your mistress before Emory goes away. You go up-stairs and give her the wink to step into the private room where I will be in waiting. Do you hear?'

'Yes, massa,' answered the negro with a grin, 'Paul know

wot he 'bout—Paul neber make no mistake !' and up-stairs he started followed by Hollowell, who entered a door leading from the entry to the private apartment, while the negro knocked for admittance at the door of the sanctum within which Emory and Florence were holding a consultation. The negro managed the matter very adroitly, after being authorized by Florence, who knew his knock, to enter. He made some plausible excuse for his intrusion, and as soon as he could catch his mistress's eye, he managed by grimacing and pointing towards the door of the apartment to make her understand what he meant, after which he again disappeared. Florence soon found occasion to leave Emory alone for a moment, when she entered the room in which Hollowell was waiting to receive her, and great was her surprise and gratification both, when made acquainted with the nature of the revealment he had to make. She had put Emory off from time to time with first one lie and then another, till he began to grow suspicious, and it was necessary that something should be done to allay his doubts. At the very time when the negro boy interrupted her, she was endeavoring to frame some story about his child which should appear plausible, for he had told her that if the infant was not at once forthcoming he would drop all further communication with her. She had more than once thought of the expedient of endeavoring to procure a strange child and to palm it off upon him as his own, but she saw a great difficulty in procuring what should appear to him proof positive of its identity, and besides the danger of his own offspring turning up at some time or other would always exist, and such a contingency was frightful to contemplate, for it would at once destroy her power over her enemy. But all these difficulties were now obviated. He was indeed to have his child—his own child—(or at least Florence thought so, and so did Hollowell, for that matter) and the power which such an achievement would give her over the now doubting Emory tickled the pseudo fortune-teller mightily. She did not stop

to think what part Estelle and her lover might play in this new act of the exciting drama. She gave no heed to that. All she wished was to do away with the present danger and leave the future to take care of itself.

Her countenance beamed with gratification as she re-entered the magic room (after her interview with Hollowell) where Emory was impatiently waiting her return.

‘Eureka!’ she cried exultingly, ‘my art has conquered at last! After whole nights of watching, and toil, and anxiety, my labors are rewarded! I have found thy child!’

‘Where is it, then?’ enquired Emory, with much anxiety.

‘Where I may lay my hands upon it at any time,’ was the answer.

‘You have given me such proofs of your power heretofore,’ said Emory, ‘that I am inclined to believe you, and yet it seems to me impossible that you should know secrets which are hidden from the common eye. But if your singular second sight enables you to search out the child, of course you must have a knowledge of its mother also. What of her?’

‘She is dead,’ was the reply, ‘and her child is in the care of those who would teach it to hate thee, if they were permitted to rear it, which they will not be, for to-morrow night it will be in thy possession, and thine ardent longing will be gratified.’

‘But shall I not know the parties to whom my child has been entrusted? Shall I not see and talk with them so that all doubts of my child’s identity will be removed?’

‘Not at present,’ was the answer, ‘such a thing would be impossible. Hereafter thou mayst know more, but now I can only assure thee that proofs incontestible, and such as thou must perforce believe, will be furnished thee that the child is thine own. Let this satisfy thee. And now, farewell, for my time is precious. I shall expect a larger sum than thou hast yet bestowed upon me, when I place the infant within thine arms.’

‘You shall have it,’ replied Emory, ‘if you remove every doubt, but not otherwise.’

‘Enough,’ said Florence, haughtily, ‘I will not exact it otherwise. And now, once more, farewell, for I would be alone.’

Thus admonished for the second time Emory took his departure, and the door had no sooner closed upon him, than Florence’s two confederates, Cantwell and Hollowell, entered through the private door, and after indulging in a hearty laugh at the expense of Emory, the three took their departure for the residence of Estelle.

They reached there without accident, and found the depraved couple waiting to receive them. It was a strange reunion, and one calculated to call up unpleasant reflections in the minds of all concerned. At the sight of Florence the hearts of Estelle and James Ely at once began to swell with rage and indignation, as the recollection of the deep wrongs which she had inflicted upon them came in their minds, while Florence instantly felt that such was the case, and the consequence was a freezing coldness of a few moments duration, which rendered the scene an exceedingly unpleasant one to the whole party. Even Hollowell for the time being, lost his imperturbable self assurance, and was evidently ill at ease, but soon an allusion, on the part of Cantwell, to the matter which called them together, changed the current of their thoughts, and business absorbed every other idea.

‘So it is really your intention, Estelle, is it,’ asked Florence, after mutual enquiries concerning past affairs had passed between them, ‘to deliver up your child to the custody of its father?’

‘Yes,’ answered Estelle, ‘after much reflection I have come to the determination to pursue that course. I think it my duty to do so.’

This reply and the tone in which it was uttered somewhat startled Florence, for she began to fear that Estelle had relen-

ted, and might perhaps herself go back to her husband. This would not have suited her, for she had led Emory to believe that Estelle was dead, and his faith in the infallibility of her second sight would have been considerably shaken had he learned that she was yet above ground.

‘Then you have repented of the course which you so very justly, in my opinion, pursued in running away from him?’ she said, enquiringly, and in an ironical manner—‘well, I gave you credit for more spirit! Perhaps you will go back to him again, and put up with his taunts, and inuendos, and ill usage? But I doubt somewhat if he would receive you. I’m sure he would not, unless you went down upon your knees to him and begged his pardon in the most abject manner, for his amiability has not increased a jot during your absence.’

A look of the deepest malignity, settled upon the features of Estelle as she answered with terrible calmness—

‘Florence, it is evident that although the same mother bore us both, you do not know me. What! go back to *him*! Ask *his* pardon! Listen to me, all of you. I speak freely, because I know, that every one here has suffered injury at his hands and would gladly be revenged upon him. I do not wish him to know of my existence—much less of my place of abode—I wish to be as dead in his imagination, as I will ever be alive to revenge. Day and night will I hang upon his trail like his own shadow—unrelentingly will I pursue him till perseverance reward me with the full measure of revenge which I covet. I will lend all my energies—every thought and feeling—to the compassing of his destruction. In the broad glare of day I will plot his ruin, and during the still watches of the night I will lie in wait for him. This will I do here, and if it is possible to continue the pursuit in that other land of mystery, I will become a servant of Satan, if by so doing I can sink him lower, lower, lower, into the fathomless depths of unutterable woe!’

‘If such are your feelings towards him,’ asked Florence, ‘why do you gratify him by restoring to him his child?’

‘I have a purpose to serve by so doing,’ replied Estelle, ‘and this answer must suffice for the present. I will now draw up a statement concerning myself and the child which will satisfy him that he is its father. This you can say was found upon me after death.’ Seating herself at a table she executed the document, which she handed to Florence, and then continued, ‘now all I ask is that one of you confer with me daily, and keep me advised of his movements—in the meantime I will study how I may annoy him. It will go hard if the united efforts of half a-dozen heads cannot cause one to lie uneasily upon its pillow.’

After some further talk Florence and her confederates departed, taking with them the child of Ely, which Estelle had led them to suppose was her own son, and the next night it was duly placed in the possession of Emory, who perfectly convinced from the document which Estelle had drawn up that it was his own, was well nigh beside himself with joy.

It was only a few days afterwards that Estelle, accompanied by Kate O'Donnell, went out with her own infant, and returned some hours afterwards, much to the surprise of Ely, without it. He had no particular interest in the matter, however, and as his unscrupulous companion offered no explanation voluntarily, he did not seek to draw one from her, and it was not long before he forgot that either her offspring or his own ever existed.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

THE occurrences which happened during the sixteen years succeeding the events thus far detailed, need but slight notice, and the author will briefly allude to the movements of the different characters, in order that the reader may not be left entirely in the dark concerning them.

It is perhaps needless to state that the individual who waylaid and knocked down Robert Barker, on his return towards home from the double wedding, was employed to do so by Emory, who, beside himself with passion at having been foiled in every attempt to hurt the reputation of the youth, had resorted to the desperate expedient of employing a ruffian to knock out his brains. In this, however, he also signally failed, for Barker, although severely, was not dangerously hurt, and was confined but a few days from the injuries he sustained.

The young man was perfectly satisfied as to who had been instrumental in causing the murderous attack upon him, but as he had no proof of the fact, he let the matter pass over, and was careful not to expose himself thereafter. His unceasing vigilance procured him immunity from any second attempt at assassination, but it could not prevent his enemies from hurling at him, as before, the poisoned shafts of calumny and misrepresentation. At almost every turn he was met by

some fresh proof of the malignity of Emory and his tools, who did not stop in their endeavors to ruin his character as a Christian, but went so far as to address anonymous letters to Helen Wallace, warning her to beware of him as a wolf in sheep's clothing, and relating many stories, (which had no foundation in truth, of course,) of his immorality and hypocrisy. Their unholy labors were all in vain, however, for fortunately Helen had other correspondents than these unscrupulous parties—friends tried and true, who had her welfare at heart, and who would not have misrepresented facts to her injury, not for the wealth of the Indies. These friends wrote her how noble were the efforts made by her lover for regeneration—how unceasingly he strove by acts of Christian benevolence and brotherly love to cancel the errors of the past, and to gain the esteem and approbation of his fellow men.—This was sufficient, and three months after Barker had officiated as groomsman at the wedding of Jack Ainslie, he led the girl whom he so dearly loved to the altar. The happy event had anything but a consolatory effect upon the vindictive nature of Emory, who chafed like a foiled tiger when he heard of it; but there were events more unpalatable than this in store for him, during the sixteen years alluded to. In the first place he was arraigned at the bar of public opinion for the part he acted towards old Mr. Grant, who died in the most abject misery in the almshouse, and a statement of whose case, including the manner in which he was swindled by Emory, at the commencement of their acquaintance, very singularly found its way into the newspapers. Hardly had the agony of mind which this exposure occasioned him been somewhat allayed, when he was arrested at the instance of the uncle of the deceased Jeannette Matthews, and taken to Troy to answer the charge of being a party to the procurement of abortion. After much trouble, and spending considerable money, he escaped conviction upon this charge, the nature of the testimony not being exactly satisfactory on account of the

length of time which had elapsed between the commission of the offence and the trial. He went back to New York after this, crest-fallen and dispirited, but it was only to meet fresh trouble—for during his absence a piece of property belonging to him, valued at between forty and fifty thousand dollars, was burnt to the ground just after the policy of insurance had expired. Not long after this, Cantwell, whom he had all along suspected of operating against him, decamped to Europe in company with Florence, robbing him of a large sum of money, and cheating Hollowell at the same time.

This combination of untoward events well nigh unseated his reason, and while he was casting about him for some means of satisfaction, Hollowell made bold to present himself, and to offer his services in assisting the miserable man to recover his money.

Emory's first impulse was to have Hollowell arrested—but, upon taking a sober second thought, it occurred to him that Hollowell, although he was not to be trusted in pecuniary affairs, might yet be of use to him, and so he restrained his anger, and listened to what the adventurer had to say. Hollowell felt savage at having been duped by Cantwell and Florence, and he did not hesitate to make a clean breast of the matter. He related to Emory everything that had transpired, and even told him where his wife and her lover were then staying. He also informed Emory that he suspected, from what he had heard, that Estelle had been mainly instrumental in bringing about everything which had befallen him, except, perhaps, the flight of Cantwell.

The depraved man gnashed his teeth with rage as he listened to Hollowell's story—and when he had heard him through, he determined upon the arrest of Estelle at once.—Nor was it revenge alone which prompted him to take this course. He was afraid of his vindictive wife, and he could not rest easy while he knew that she was near him, and at liberty. He trembled for the safety of his child, too. He had

learned to love the infant, and, as it was the only object which had ever awakened one warm feeling in his cold and selfish heart, the sentiment was doubly strong because it was novel. The fact that Estelle had been so willing to give up the child, remarking at the same time that she had an object in so doing—all which Hollowell was careful to explain to Emory—made it palpable enough that she had formed some dreadful project which she intended to act upon when the fitting time arrived; and he determined, if possible, to frustrate her intentions, by procuring her arrest on a charge of murder.

While he was making his preparations to this end, however, Estelle was not idle. She was made aware of the flight of Cantwell and Florence at the same time that Hollowell was—and, well knowing the character of the latter, she naturally concluded what course he would pursue under the circumstances, and she determined to leave New York immediately, and to remain absent until the danger was over. Accordingly she and Kate O'Donnell started on a trip to Cincinnati, leaving Ely behind to watch the progress of events—and when Hollowell called the next morning, at the direction of Emory, to keep Estelle in conversation till preparations for her arrest were made, he found the house in possession of a pawnbroker who exhibited a bill of sale for the furniture, which he said he had purchased the day before, 'all in de lump.'

Here again Emory was baffled, and he wept tears of rage when Hollowell informed him of his wife's escape. If he had felt sure she would stay away he would have been perfectly satisfied, but the conviction forced itself upon him that she would not remain absent long, and this caused him great uneasiness.

Time passed on, however, and as he heard nothing of her, he began to imagine that her fears would keep her from ever troubling him again, and he grew quite easy in his mind so far as she was concerned. But although he never knew of her presence, she was often near him, and she made herself

felt, too. Two or three different times was his house entered by burglars, and twice did he suffer pecuniary loss from incendiary fires which she had caused to be lighted, but he never for a moment suspected her agency in the matter, for no attempt had been made to deprive him of his greatest treasure—his child—and he imagined that her first hostile demonstration on her return would be made in that direction.

His boy—or rather Ely's boy—grew finely, and often, as Emory gazed in his fine, intelligent eyes, and parted the golden curls upon his intellectual brow, a feeling of selfish gratification would creep into his sordid heart to reflect how bright a representative he should leave behind him when he had passed away. Not that he cared anything for virtue for its own sake, but he knew that the world generally believed in the trite adage, 'like father, like son,' and his very stubbornness led him to wish that the adage might for once be made a lie. So he lavished every care upon the boy, whom he had named Everard, after himself, and had the satisfaction of seeing him at sixteen, an exceedingly intelligent and correct-minded youth, and the idol of the college in which he had placed him.

Year after year, however, the once wealthy hypocrite grew poorer, everything went wrong with him—his speculations failed—loss after loss came upon him—misfortune met him at every turn—and when he placed young Everard in college, the fear for the first time arose in his mind that he might become so reduced as to be unable to carry out his intentions concerning the youth. The thought was frightful to him, and he determined to resort to any means, however dishonest, to prevent such a state of affairs.

Hollowell stuck close by Emory notwithstanding all his misfortunes—not of course because he had any friendship for him, but because he had a tolerably easy time of it, and because he calculated on the possession, some day or other, of the whole of his (Emory's) property. As age grew upon him,

Emory lost a great degree of that shrewdness which had characterized his early life—his perceptive faculties were not so acute—his mind was less active, and his firmness somewhat shaken. Hollowell perceived this, and he was not slow to take advantage of it, by operating upon Emory to suit his own purposes. So successful was he in his operations that he soon wormed himself into the complete confidence of his employer, whose distrust of him at first was so great that he would not even speak to him upon matters of business. Having arrived at this point, Hollowell began weaving a net in which to enmesh his victim. At first he hinted distinctly at what might be done to ensure a fortune, and when he noticed that the hint called forth no token of displeasure, he ventured to suggest openly, that if Emory would obtain goods to a large amount by representing himself as perfectly sound, it would be the easiest thing in the world for him to pass his property over to him (Hollowell,) and thus *do* his creditors. He might perhaps lay himself open to an action for false pretences, but it would amount to nothing—a few hundreds at most would make it all right, and when he had got through with the law he could resume possession of his property. Hollowell did not want anything for his services—(so he said)—all he wanted was a home and a little pocket money—Emory might advance him cash enough if he pleased to enable him to embark, on a limited scale, in the auction business—and this was all he would ask for. The bait took. Emory did precisely as Hollowell wished him to, thus placing himself entirely in the latter's power, and while the one was employed in swindling tradesmen, the other was driving a flourishing trade in the mock auction line.

While this was going on, Estelle never lost sight of her victim more than a few months, at most, at a time. Her life was spent in travelling around from place to place—north, east, south and west—for Ely had turned gambler, and a gambler's life is necessarily an erratic one—but she returned

to the city as often as possible, and when absent, she had those in her pay who kept her well advised of all that was going on. She had a double object in visiting New York frequently, as will appear in the course of our narrative.

For some years Ely was very successful in his disreputable profession, and they got along smoothly enough; but wickedness cannot always flourish, and a circumstance at last happened which cut short the career of one of the guilty pair, and left the other nearly destitute. Ely got into a quarrel with a Southerner while playing cards on board one of the Mississippi steamers, in the course of which he was fatally stabbed, and died in a few hours afterwards. Estelle had his body conveyed to New Orleans for interment, after which she and Kate O'Donnell once more returned to New York. Here poverty soon overtook them, and they were obliged to part with, one by one, every article of value which they possessed, and finally they made the acquaintance of and co-operated with—though so slyly as to escape the surveillance of the police—some of the most desperate characters.

Such was the state of affairs at the commencement of our next chapter.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

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It was a bleak night in November, when Estelle Emory and Kate O'Donnell sat in the basement of a respectable looking house in Bleecker street, New York. The apartment was miserably furnished, although an exterior view of the house would indicate that its tenants were, at least, respectable mechanics. This was, indeed, the case. The upper portion of the house was occupied by persons not actually in want, and Estelle had chosen the premises on that account. It mattered not to the landlord what style of furniture his tenants were possessed of, so long as he got his rent, which he did invariably in advance, so Estelle found no difficulty in securing the place, notwithstanding that she had little or nothing to put in it. A couple of strips of rag carpet, four common chairs, a trunk and a cot bedstead, were the only articles of furniture the room could boast of. A piece of a tallow candle was burning in a tin candlestick upon the dirty mantel-piece, and a few embers were smouldering on the cheerless hearth. Over these the two wretched creatures, side by side, sat shivering, and as the cold night breeze whistled through the key-hole with a mournful sound, or rudely shook the window casement, they pulled their wretched garments more closely around them, and crept further into the fire-place.

'It's cold, Kate,' said Estelle, 'very cold!' and as she spoke, she shuddered involuntarily, and her teeth slightly chattered.

'Thru' for you,' replied Kate, 'but sure it isn't so cowl'd as it will be wthin the snow is on the ground and the white frost is on the windy-panes. Och, murther! iv it's starvin' we are wid the cowl'd now, fhat'll we do thin, misthress, dear?'

'I've thought of it, Kate,' answered Estelle, as she turned her lack-lustre eyes upon her uncouth-looking attendant; 'but I have no fears for myself. I have a strange presentiment that I shall die before this winter is over, but not before I taste of that sweet revenge for which I have waited so many years. After that I don't wish to live. I would sooner die than not.'

'An' troth it's little I'd care for life afther yerself is gone,' answered Kate, 'for wot 'ud I be doin' widout you?'

'Kate,' said Estelle, after a slight pause, 'during the whole time that I have been knocking about the world, you are the only true friend I have ever had. From the time when you first decided to share my fortunes, you have never deserted me, and as we have lived together, so I hope we will die together.'

'It's mesilf that hopes that same,' answered Kate, 'for sure no wan would care for the likes o' me iv you wor under the sod.'

A silence of some moments ensued, when, at length, Estelle, heaving a heavy sigh, exclaimed—

'Ugh, how I shiver! Put on that other stick of wood, Kate—I feel as though I had an ague-chill.'

Kate did as she was desired, and having, by a vigorous blowing, called forth a sickly flame from the dying embers, she looked up at Estelle, and remarked—

'It's bettther for ye to take a little gin, misthress—it'll war-m ye.'

'I don't know but it will do me good,' replied Estelle, 'and you may pour me out a little.'

Kate went to the closet, and taking forth a junk bottle and

a broken tea-cup, turned out about a gill of the liquid, which Estelle swallowed with a gusto which proved too plainly how fast a hold the baneful practice had taken upon her. Kate followed the example of her mistress, and had just placed the articles in the closet again, when a quick footfall descended the basement steps, and the next moment a knock was heard at the door.

‘It is Dick,’ said Estelle; ‘shut the closet door and take your seat, Kate, so that he will not suspect anything.’ Kate did so, and raising her voice, Estelle exclaimed, ‘Come in!’

The door opened, and a boy about sixteen years of age—but who, from the effects of early dissipation, looked much older—entered the apartment, and stood gazing steadily first at one and then at the other of its occupants. He was rather comely in feature, but his face wore a look of desperate recklessness frightful to behold in one so young, and every bad passion to which human nature is liable, seemed to lurk in the depths of his wild-looking sloe-black eyes.

‘What news, Dick?’ asked Estelle; ‘any luck lately?’

Without replying to her interrogatory, the boy advanced close to her, and stooping over, he said:

‘Blow in my eye, Aunt, will you?’

‘Nonsense,’ replied Estelle, ‘you’re always thinking about drinking. You must have an idea we are always at it.’

‘I don’t care whether you are always at it or not,’ replied the youth, ‘I smell gin, and I’m goin’ to have some. Kate, get me some gin!’

Kate looked at Estelle, as though to ask her wishes in the matter.

‘I suppose you might as well give him some,’ said Estelle, ‘he won’t rest satisfied without it. But be careful, don’t give him too much.’

‘Oh, gas!’ exclaimed the boy, contemptuously, and following the classical remark up with an oath, he snatched the bottle from the hands of Kate O’Donnell just as she brought it

forth from the closet for the second time, and pouring out nearly a cup full he took it down at a swallow.

‘That’s the kind!’ he said, smacking his lips, ‘I ain’t had a drink before this two hours, and I was as dry as a chip.’

‘Well, don’t talk so loud,’ said Estelle, ‘there are respectable people living in this house, and I shouldn’t like any of them to hear you.’

‘D——n the people!’ was the reply, in a still louder tone, ‘what d’yer s’pose I care for the people?’

‘That’s always the way with you,’ said Estelle, deprecatingly, ‘you never can drink a drop without getting either yourself or some of your friends into difficulty. If you don’t sit down at once and be quiet, you shall never drink another drop in this house while I have the power to prevent it.’

This threat had the desired effect, and the boy seated himself.

‘Now, then,’ said Estelle, ‘what is there new? Anything?’

‘No, nothing worth speaking of,’ answered the boy; then suddenly recollecting himself, he continued. ‘Oh, you know that old buffer you’ve bin wanting me to rob for a long time past?’ Emory, his name is, ain’t it?’

Estelle nodded affirmatively.

‘Well,’ continued the boy, ‘I come one o’ the best dodges over him yesterday afternoon I ever come over anybody in my life.’

‘What was it, Dick?’ asked Estelle, eagerly, ‘what was it, my son?’

‘Why, you see,’ replied Dick, ‘I was loafing around the house to see how it was situated, so that I’d know better how to operate if I did get into it at any time. Well, as I was takin’ observations from the opposite side of the street, I saw the kitchen wench come out o’ the basement and go into the corner grocery. ‘Now,’ thinks I, ‘that wench very like left the basement door unlatched, so’s she can get in agin without trouble, and if she has done so, where’s the harm of my exam-

inin' the inside as well as the outside of the house?' So over I goes, and sure enough the door was unlatched, and in I went. I made up my mind that if I met anybody on the stairs I'd enquire for Mr. Emory and tell him some some cock-an'-bull story 'bout somebody in Wall-street wantin' to see him. I passed along upon tip-toe, and hearin' voices in the parlor I didn't stop there, but kept on up, and brought up in front of the first door I met after mountin' the second flight. I listened for some time, but didn't hear anything—then I put my eye to the key-hole, and as I didn't see anybody, I just opened the door softly and went in. There was very handsome furniture in the room, and among other things there was a splendid book case, and writing desk, and lots of books. There was a small tin box on a chair in front of the book-case, fastened with a padlock, and as it looked as though it might contain valuables, I was jest goin' to try to force it open, when I heard footsteps on the stairs. I was afraid somebody might be comin' to the room I was in, and the fust idea that entered my head was to lock the door. I didn't like to do that, though, if I could help it, for there was danger in it; and as I glanced around the room I noticed that there was plenty of room for me under the sofa, and under there I passed as quick as thought. I hadn't more'n got myself comfortably stowed away when sure enough the door opened, and in came old Emory (at least I 'spect it was him,) and his son.

'There seemed to have been a quarrel between 'em before they entered the room about the boy's mother, for when they seated themselves onto the sofa just over me, the old man ses, 'Eyerard, you're an ungrateful boy to take sides against your father who has reared you from infancy and always loved you, in favor of a vile baggage who deserted you when you most needed her attention and who never felt any affection for you!' My eyes! you ought to heard how the boy talked back!

'Father,' ses he, 'if what Mr. Hollowell said in the conversation which I accidentally overheard between you, is true, my

mother had some excuse for not acting right, and you should be the last one to apply harsh terms to her. O, father, (and then I could hear the little fool snivle,) you say you half suspect that she is in the city now, and that it is your intention to hunt her out and give her into the hands of justice! Do you think that God would ever pardon such a crime as that? Do you think that I could ever love you afterwards! O, no, I could not! If my mother is really the wicked woman you say she is, do search her out, but not to punish her—take her by the hand, and lead her home, and tell her you forgive her and will pardon her for the sake of her child. Treat her kindly as you have ever treated me, and learn her to love you as I love you! Do this, father, and God will bless you!’

‘Well, the old man, instead o’ seemin’ to have his soft tetch-ed by this, jumped off the sofa and tore about the room for a time like an actor in a passion.

‘You undutiful young scoundrel,’ he yelled out at last, ‘you must choose between your mother and me! Either you must promise never to say a word in her favor again, or you must leave this house forever and take care of yourself as you best may. Now, sir, give me your decision!’

‘And wot d’yer think the young greeny did?’ said Dick, when he had got thus far into the narrative.

‘I don’t know—what did he do, Dick?’ replied Estelle, who as well as Kate O’Donnell had been listening with the most intense interest.

‘Why,’ answered Dick, ‘he turned towards the door, and with the tears a-streamin’ down his cheeks, he ses, ‘well, then, good bye, father, and God bless you! It is hard, but I must leave you, for I never can cease to plead for my poor mother when I think that she perhaps may be friendless and homeless, while I am surrounded by plenty!’

‘How would you have done if you had been in his place, Dick?’ enquired Estelle, and her thin lip quivered with emotion as she put the question.

‘Why, you must be jolly green to ask,’ answered Dick, ‘I wouldn’t give up a comfortable home and plenty rocks to spend for twenty mothers—not if I saw ’em all starvin’ in the gutter before my eyes.’

‘I thought so,’ exclaimed Estelle, as a snake-like expression gleamed in her black eyes—‘I thought so, didn’t you, Kate?’

‘Troth I did!’ was the laconic but expressive answer.

‘Of course you thought so,’ said Dick, ‘how could you think anything else? You’ve bin acquainted with me long enough to know that there ain’t nothin’ green about me.’

‘Yes, yes,’ replied Estelle hastily, ‘but go on—how did it end? did he let the boy go?’

‘Why, you seem to be very anxious about it,’ said Dick, ‘one would think you was concerned in the matter!’ then without waiting for a reply he continued, ‘No, he didn’t let the boy go. Jist as he had his hand on the door knob the old fellow called him back again. ‘Stop, sir!’ ses he, ‘I b’leve I am your father, and I have the right to command you! You shall neither leave my protection, nor shall you have an opportunity of mentioning this hateful subject again. To-morrow you return to College!’

‘As you please, sir,’ ses the boy.

‘Out of my sight! you ungrateful hound!’ ses the old man furiously, ‘begone to your room, and stay there till I send for you.’

‘The boy left, and after he was gone, the old man placed the tin box up on the writing desk, took a key out of his pocket, unlocked it, and began fumblin’ over a lot of papers and mutterin’ to himself. ‘I wonder,’ ses he, ‘if I’m never to be rid of her! Hollowell says he thinks he caught a glimpse of her in the street, but was so situated at the time that he could not follow her. Psha! he must have been mistaken. She would not be in this city long without causing me to *feel* her presence, if I did not *see* her!’

‘After mutterin’ a lot more such stuff as this which I don’t

remember, he left the room, and after he had vamosed I crept out o' my hidin' place and was very glad to find that he had gone off and left the key in the box. I had made up my mind to steal box and all while I was under the sofa, but I had no occasion to do so when I could get into it without any difficulty, so I opened it expectin' to see a big pile of shiners, and I came near swearin' out loud to observe that there wasn't nothin' into it except a lot of papers and a lady's portrait.'

'Did you steal them?' asked Estelle eagerly.

'Not all of 'em,' answered Dick, 'I put the portrait in my pocket, and had just picked up a small package of letters when I heard footsteps again, and cramming the package also in my pocket, I made tracks for my hiding place again. It was the old man, who must in his excitement have forgotten to lock the box, and had returned for the purpose of doin' it. I'd have been in a tight place if he'd examined it and missed what was gone out of it, but he didn't. He jist merely locked the box and then took it off with him. I don't know how it was,' continued Dick, with a singular expression of countenance, 'but may I be cursed if I didn't feel when I crawled out from under that sofa the second time, as if I had a natural right to everything in that house, and as though I'd jist as leave any one would catch me there as not. The feelin' only lasted for a minit, but during' that minit, if I hadn't a knode my name was Waffles, d—n me if I wouldn't a thought it was Emory and that savage old duck was my father.'

Estelle trembled in every joint (although the boy did not observe it) as she remarked in a tone of forced calmness—

'Don't talk such nonsense, Dick—let me see the portraits and the letters—have you them with you?'

'Yes,' answered the boy, as he inserted his hand in his pocket and pulled the articles forth—'here they are, and there's something very sing'lar about the portrait, too—you'll

laugh when I tell you what I think—I think it looks just like you might have looked when you was a young woman.'

'Nonsense,' said Estelle, as she took the portrait and gazed thoughtfully upon it—'do you think it possible I ever could have looked like that? Would you suppose, Kate,' she continued, turning to her companion and drawing her attention to the likeness, 'that a creature so young, and beautiful, and innocent-looking as that, could by harsh treatment and battling with the world, change to such a haggard, care-worn wretch as I am?' There was a bitterness in her words which Kate well understood as she answered—

'Divil a likelihood in it at all, at all, misthress dear—sure it's dhramin' the boy is. The whiskey don't agree wid him.'

'I would have pawned the picture,' said Dick, without paying any attention to the remark of Kate, 'but I didn't think it would be exactly safe to do so just yet, so I brought it to you. You generally do about as well with my property as anybody I can trust it with.'

'That's right, Dick,' answered Estelle, encouragingly, 'always bring whatever you get to me and you shan't lose anything by it,' and as she spoke she arose to place the miniature and the papers in her trunk.

'What are you going to do with the papers, Aunty?' enquired Dick, 'what's into 'em?'

'O, I don't suppose they are of any importance,' answered Estelle; 'I don't feel like looking over them to-night—I had rather take daylight for it and I guess I'd let them go till to-morrow.'

'I wish that old swell-head mother of mine had a learned me how to read, and then I could a' looked over them myself,' said Dick, doggedly; 'I don't know one letter from another 'ceptin' when I see 'em painted on signs, and I wouldn't a knowed that much if I hadn't a learned it without bein' showed.'

'O, never mind, Dick,' said Estelle, soothingly; 'learning

isn't of much importance after all. Picking a pocket neatly is a greater accomplishment than being able to read. But what have you been about for a month past? Is the job you have been telling me of the only one you've accomplished?

'No,' answered Dick, 'myself and two of the other boys did a little something in our line last night. We came near gittin' caught twice before we made anything, though. We started on a wharf lay, and went on board of two schooners to see if we could pick up anything; but we was chased both times, and then we made up our minds to go round to Jack Ketch's crib in Water street, and wait till it was a little late. On our way there, we stopped into a place to get a drink, and here we came across an old fellow who was about drunk enough to be foolish, and we mixed in with him. He got tellin' us about bein' done out of fifty dollars by the mock auction dodge, and askin' us how he should go to work to git his money back agin. Of course we felt very sorry for him, and told him all about what a set of scamps there was in the city, and all that sort of gammon—then we treated him once or twice, and at last we got him to go with us. We took him down into Jack's place, got a couple o' glasses o' the best red-eye—the stuff that never fails—down his neck, and then invited him to take a walk before he was too far gone. Well, we got him down onto the end of the dock, and then we seated him onto the string piece, and talked pooty to him for about ten or fifteen minits, by the end of which time he was jest as helpless as an infant, and we made as free with his pockets as we pleased. We found two galvanized watches and one gold watch onto him, and a wallet with fifteen dollars and a lot of papers into it, and that was all. I had a good mind to tumble him overboard for allowin' himself to be skinned before we came across him, but I didn't. We took off his boots, and his coat, and his hat, and then laid him out carefully onto the wharf, so's he couldn't roll into the water, and yet I ain't got no doubt that the fellow was ungrateful

enough to curse us when he woke up this mornin', instead o' thankin' us for all we did for him. I got his wallet and its contents and the two bogus tickers for my share, and let the two others have the gold watch between 'em. I burnt a countryman the first thing this morning with one of the galvanized repeaters, for which I got ten dollars; so on the whole I ain't done so bad. Here's the wallet I got from the old fellow—just look over them bits o' paper and see if any o' them's worth anything;' and he took the article from his pocket and passed it over to Estelle, who proceeded to look over its contents.

The first paper she opened was a receipted bill of sale for two gold watches, made out in the name of Anthony Butters, and signed C. Hollowell.

'Did the man you robbed on the dock tell you where he belonged?' asked Estelle.

'Yes,' replied Dick, 'I think he said he was from New Orleans.'

'Why, Kate,' exclaimed Estelle, exultingly, 'as sure as you're born it was my old lover, Toney Butters.'

'Well, that I mayn't sin!' replied Kate, 'bud that's a good wan! Ah, musha! but he's the soft ould chap entirely!'

'And who do you suppose was the mock auctioneer who fleeced him?' asked Estelle.

'Mebbe it was Hollowell,' answered Kate, 'for sure it's ourselves that knows he's in the dirty business.'

'You've guessed it the first time,' said Estelle as she opened the next paper—'let's see—what is this? A receipt for money paid on account—another receipt—a memorandum of receipts and expenditures—a note from his wife cautioning him to keep sober and to shun female society—another receipt, and for pew rent, too, as I'm a sinner—that's all!' and replacing the papers, she closed the wallet and handed it back to Dick.

‘Ain’t they worth anything?’ asked Dick, in a tone of disappointment.

‘Not to you,’ replied Estelle, ‘nor to any one else, except Butters himself—not a cent!’

‘Then I might as well burn ’em up all together—wallet and all,’ said Dick, as suiting the action to the word he threw the wallet and its contents upon the burning log—‘if I should accidentally get pulled,’ he continued, ‘and stranger things than that have happened, I shouldn’t like to have such articles found onto me, for the officers might think I didn’t come honestly by them.’

The three watched the property of the unfortunate Butters in silence till it was entirely consumed, and then Dick Waffles jumped up suddenly, and expressed his determination to ‘toddle’ as soon as he had taken another drink. Accordingly the bottle was again brought forth, and helping himself freely he swallowed another draught of the poison, deposited a huge quid of tobacco beneath his dexter cheek, buttoned up his coat, and the two miserable women were shortly thereafter again left alone.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

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THE reader will remember that, upon two or three different occasions in the course of this narrative, Emory, when angered at Cantwell, uttered dark threats concerning a murder, and we shall now proceed to state a few particulars which will account for these threats, and at the same time show why Emory, before he resolved to marry Estelle Grant, stepped out of his way to make Helen Wallace the victim of his lust.

Emory had laid the foundation for the immense fortune which he possessed when first introduced to the reader, in Texas, whither he had emigrated, under the assumed name of Rogers, in early life, to avoid the consequences of a serious difficulty in which he had become involved in New York. It was here that he first made the acquaintance of Cantwell (who then went by the name of William Walker,) and it was here also that he managed to bring about the circumstances which placed that vile being so completely in his power. He had not been in Texas a great while when business threw him into the society of many of the most respectable merchants of the town in which he had located himself, and among these was a young man of the name of Jerome Newman—a generous, open-hearted, unsuspecting individual—the man of all others most

apt to fall a victim to the duplicity of so smooth-spoken a man as Emory. Newman was a married man, who, like hundreds of others, had left his wife (he had no children) behind him, and, in a spirit of adventure, and buoyed up with the hope of making a speedy fortune, had sought out that land of promise, concerning which there were at the time so many conflicting statements. The young adventurer was successful beyond his most sanguine expectations—and at the time when he made the acquaintance of Emory, he had realized what might have been considered a competency, and was thinking of settling up his affairs to the end that he might take up his residence permanently in that home in New York which he had for some years only occasionally visited. Happy would it have been for him had he followed out his intentions, but, unfortunately he listened to Emory's specious advice, and the result was fatal to him.

Newman had had many business transactions with Emory, of minor importance, and, as everything had been conducted fairly and with some profit to both parties, he had not only conceived a strong friendship for the wily hypocrite, but had imbibed the most unbounded faith in his correct judgment and tact in business matters. When, therefore, Emory pointed out to him the absurdity of closing his business with only half a fortune, when a little bold speculation, with him (Emory) as a partner, would render him independently rich in a very short time, he was induced first to listen to, then to reflect upon, and finally to adopt his unprincipled counsellor's suggestions. The result of this injudicious action upon his part was that he soon found his affairs in the most inextricable confusion. He was certain he had lost nothing, and yet, at the expiration of one year after his connection with Emory, the latter's account footed up a loss of some thousands of dollars. This led to words between them, in the course of which Newman's frank and fearless nature impelled him to tax his partner openly with fraud, but when he observed the calm self-possession of the

man—his look of meek humility and injured innocence—he began to think that he might, perhaps, have suspected him wrongfully, and the matter ended in a reconciliation, although Newman determined to cut himself loose from his engagement as speedily as was convenient. He came to this conclusion too late, however, for in a short time thereafter, he was brought down by a fever, and never left his bed again alive, although it was not the disease which caused his death. When he was first taken sick, Emory hinted to Cantwell (who had for some time been in his employ, and whose character he had thoroughly tested) that, in the event of Newman's demise, he should be in a way to operate as he thought proper, and should consequently be enabled not only to enrich himself, but to give Cantwell a start in the world likewise. The hint was a very distant one, but it was not hard for so acute an individual as Cantwell to understand it perfectly. Accordingly, he manifested the greatest solicitude for the sick man, into whose favor he, too, had managed to ingratiate himself, and offered his services to procure a physician for him who was greatly skilled in the treatment of fevers. His services were accepted gratefully—the physician (a short-necked, bullet-headed, red-nosed, villainous-looking empyric) was brought, and—the *patient died*. After his decease, upon looking into his affairs, it was found that he had conveyed the great bulk of his property to James Rogers (Emory's pseudonym) in liquidation of certain debts contracted from time to time during their acquaintance, leaving only some few hundreds of dollars for his widow, who had, a short time previous to his death, received a letter from him couched in the most discouraging terms. Mrs. Newman had never seen Emory, but she received a letter from him after her sad bereavement, condoling with her in her deep affliction, and passing a glowing eulogium upon the virtues of her deceased husband. She also received a draft for the amount left her, and she never heard of Mr. Rogers afterwards, although he had promised

faithfully that he would call upon her and give her the particulars of her husband's death.

Time passed on, and some three years after the deplorable event just related, Mrs. Newman, still young and attractive, formed the acquaintance of and married a young sea-faring man—a captain in the merchant's service—named Wallace. By this gentlemen she had one child—a daughter—and that child was Helen Wallace. She was but about two years of age, when the unfortunate lady was again left a widow, she having received intelligence of her husband's death at sea by shipwreck.

Emory returned to New York shortly after Mrs. Newman's union with Capt. Wallace had taken place, and having after some enquiry ascertained the state of her affairs he kept her steadily in view up to the time of attempting the abduction of her daughter, and his motive for making that attempt was to first prostitute the poor girl in the hope that her disgrace would cause her mother to die of grief, and then, Helen being sole heir to the property which he had in so diabolical a manner come into possession of, to magnanimously marry her, thus making his claim to it sure in case Cantwell should at any time prove treacherous. He abandoned this plan, however, almost as soon as he had undertaken it as the reader is already aware, under the idea that it was too risky and involved too great a degree of trouble, and he trusted to the power which he exercised over Cantwell to protect himself against exposure at any time.

Among other property which Emory inherited by the deed of conveyance which he himself had forged, was real estate in Texas, to the amount of about ten thousand dollars. Knowing that this must greatly improve in value he had not disposed of it, and at the time Cantwell ran away from him it was the biggest item in his possessions. Hardened as was the bold, bad man, he could not bear to look upon the evidences of the blackest deed which he had ever committed, and he had for-

bidden Cantwell ever to even mention Texas in his presence. He had also placed the papers relating to the subject in the tin box mentioned by Dick Waffles while conversing with Estelle and Kate, fully determined in his own mind that he would never look at them as long as he lived if he could possibly help it, but leave them for the benefit of his son after he (Emory) should have terminated his wicked existence.

Cantwell was aware of this determination on the part of his employer, and although he dared not expose him while living on account of the part which he himself had played in the dark drama, he resolved that the property should never descend to Emory's heirs if he could help it, and accordingly before his flight he gained access to the tin box, and having written a statement of the horrible transaction, he signed the name Wm. Walker to it (the name by which he was known in Texas, for he also went under an assumed name there) enclosed it in the deed, placed the document back as he had found it, closed the box, and fled. These papers were among those which Dick had pilfered, and while Emory supposed them to be perfectly safe they were in the hands of his worst enemy—his wife.

CHAPTER XXXV.

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ONE morning about a month after the scene which Dick Waffles had witnessed from his hiding place under the sofa between Everard Emory and the youth whom he supposed to be his son, Emory sat at his breakfast-table with the newspaper in his hands, leisurely sipping his coffee and reading a paragraph by turns. He had got through what was to him the most interesting part of the sheet, viz., the commercial department, stocks and money market, and was merely glancing over the general news of the day. He laid down the paper just as he had finished reading the details of a successful exploit performed the day before by a noted pick-pocket in Wall street, who had abstracted a wallet from the side pocket of a gentleman's coat in the presence of a thousand people, and got clear off with his plunder.

'I wonder,' he said, as he got up from the table and prepared to start out, 'when people will learn to be more cautious! I'd like to see any infernal scoundrel steal my wallet right under my nose, and escape with it! I'd freely forgive him if he did!'

A look of the severest indignation was visible upon his countenance as he delivered himself of this remark, for

although a very devil in sin himself, Emory was savagely opposed to vice in others, and he would at any time have used his best exertions to send a poor wretch to the Penitentiary for stealing a loaf of bread.

‘I’d like to see any infernal scoundrel attempt to pick *my* pocket,’ he repeated mutteringly, as he sallied forth, and took his way down town—‘I don’t believe he’d try it again—at least not till he’d served a term in the State Prison! A pretty state of things, truly! A man’s wallet twitched from his pocket in broad day-light—the street alive with people, too—and no arrest made! What are we taxed to pay a police force for, I should like to know?’

And these were the reflections of a man who had himself committed crimes which if fully proved against him, should have consigned him to the gallows!

He walked briskly along, for there was a cool, bracing air stirring, and by the time he had accomplished half-a-dozen squares his mind was occupied with other subjects than pick-pockets. He was turning over in his imagination the many swindling schemes which he had in operation, and speculating as to the termination which they would have in litigation, if it should come to that—he was wondering if it were possible that he could be criminally indicted for his transactions, and if he were, whether a jury of twelve men could be found who would be willing to send a *gentleman* to prison among common felons. Amid communings such as these, he had reached the building in Nassau street in which was his private office, and was just about ascending the steps, when suddenly he felt a quick, sharp twitch at the side pocket of his overcoat, and turning quickly he detected a boy in the act of abstracting his wallet.

With the rapidity of thought he caught the offender by the collar as he was about making his escape, and at the same time exclaimed, exultingly—

‘Ah, my fine fellow, you’ve attempted it on *me*, have you?’

But it wouldn't do—you see I have you safe enough, and if you don't go to the State Prison now, it will be because there is no law in the land! You needn't struggle,' he continued, as the boy—a stout lad—endeavored to break his hold—'you would have to be strong indeed to get away from me!'

While he spoke he looked around to see if there was a policeman in sight, but presently, as his attention was drawn to the countenance of the boy, who was now pleading hard to be set at liberty, a strange, indefinable sensation came over him, and instantly he changed his intention of giving his prisoner in custody at once, determining first to question him slightly.

'Let you go, eh?' he exclaimed, in answer to the boy's imploration. 'O yes! I'll be sure to let you go! Come along in here, and let me know who you are, and where you belong.'

The boy made no opposition, and Emory, leading him into his office, locked the door, and regarding him with a fierce expression, enquired—

'Now, sir, what's your name? Are you the same accomplished youth who operated upon the pocket of a gentleman so successfully yesterday?'

'O, no, sir!' whimpered the boy. 'I never attempted sich a thing before in my life, sir—but father's dead, sir—and mother's sick, sir—and sissy's starvin, sir—and that's why I done it, sir!' and a flood of tears ended the boy's pitiful story.

'You lie!' roared Emory, looking him full in the eye, 'you're an old hand at it. No novice in the business could operate in so finished a manner. What's your name, sir?'

'My name's Dick Waffles, sir,' answered the boy, (the prisoner was indeed that worthy young gentleman,) still affecting the lachrymose, 'and I never did such a thing before in all my life, sir—and if you don't b'lieve me, sir, come and see mother, sir.'

At the name of Waffles the same singular sensation which Emory had experienced when he first looked at the boy, again

came over him, and with some anxiety in his tone, he enquired—

‘Where do you live, sir?’

‘No. 121 — street, sir,’ was the answer.

‘Well, you can go,’ said Emory at length, after again closely scrutinizing the boy, ‘and I’ll call and see your mother.’

Dick lost no time in making himself scarce, and after he was gone Emory sat for some moments buried in anxious thought. At length he muttered to himself—

‘I thought old Mother Waffles was dead long since, and yet something tells me that it is she who has reared this boy and led him to suppose that she is his mother! But what is that to me? Why should I care if she had trained a thousand thieves?’ After another train of deep thought, he continued, with a sigh, ‘I can’t help feeling interested in that boy, for either my imagination must be distempered or he certainly does bear a great resemblance to me! Can it be that any of Jenny Matthews’ children could have lived without my knowledge, and been confided to her care? Impossible! And yet, I don’t know! I wonder if the young scoundrel gave me his correct address? Nonsense! of course not! What a fool I am to entertain such an idea for a moment! I wish I had detained him, and forced him to lead me to the old woman! But after all, I may be giving myself a great deal of anxiety for nothing. If there is a resemblance between us, it is doubtless the effect of accident, and he may be the son of some Mrs. Waffles whom I have never seen. At all events, I shall give myself no further trouble about it.’ And thus saying, he turned to his books and was soon immersed in business.

The day passed wearily with him, however, for he could not entirely shake off the heavy thoughts which oppressed him, and in the afternoon just as he was preparing to proceed homewards, the city express postman put a letter in his hands. He merely glanced at the superscription, the chirography of which was strange to him, and then breaking the seal he was sur-

prised to observe that there was neither date nor signature to the missive, which was exceedingly brief, and read as follows:

“MR. EMORY:—There will be an attempt made to break into your house to-night, so be on the look-out. You may doubt this if you please, but of course there can be no harm in using vigilance, even if the attempt is not made.”

‘Well,’ said Emory, as he folded the note up and deposited it in his pocket, ‘the thieves in New York seem determined to make a victim of me! In the morning I catch a young villain with his hand in my pocket, and in the evening I am notified that an attempt is to be made upon my house! Hollowell is off, out of town, too, and there will be nobody at home but myself and the wench. Who could this notice have come from? Doubtless from Master Waffles, who, touched with gratitude at my generosity in allowing him to escape, has taken this means to repay me. Had I better notify the police? Let me see—I hardly think that will be worth while, for there can be no danger while I am on my guard, and if this should prove to be a practical joke on the part of some of my good-natured friends—which is not unlikely—they would have the laugh upon me completely should I fill my house with policemen. I guess upon the whole I will let matters take their course, and see what it will all amount to. I can prepare myself to give the house-breaking rascals a warm reception should any indeed pay me a visit, and if the whole affair is a hoax there will be no harm done.’ And having arrived at this conclusion, Emory took his way homeward

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

WHILE all this was going on, Estelle and Kate O'Donnell sat in the miserable basement which they occupied, nursing the demon wrath, and talking over the destitute condition in which they found themselves.

'This can't last long, Kate,' said Estelle, and as she spoke, a distressing cough racked her attenuated frame, 'the rent is due to-morrow, and we haven't a cent in the house. What we are to do, I'm sure I don't know. We can't sleep in the streets.'

'That's thrue for you, mistress dear,' answered Kate, dejectedly, 'is there nothing more we cud put up the spout?'

'Not a thing,' answered Estelle, 'we have pawned everything, even to the miniature.'

'Maybe the boy 'ud fetch us something,' suggested Kate.

'Blast him! the heartless imp!' exclaimed Estelle savagely, 'he has never brought us anything yet but bad luck! He is as callous to feeling as a stone—mean, sordid, and despicable—a true son of his father—whatever I get from him is gained by wheedling, coaxing and cajoling, and all the rest have got to be like him—indeed, I believe they have influenced him somewhat—they know that I can be of no further service to them now, and so they leave me to perish. But my turn may

yet come. Kate !' she continued, while a look of malignant frenzy lighted up her sunken eyes, 'I would have murdered that boy myself ere now, had I not reserved him for something else !'

'Whist ! here he comes !' cautioned Kate, as Dick Waffles dashed down the basement way and rushed into the room, laughing vociferously.

'Hush !' said Estelle, 'don't make so much noise, Dick, the people in the house will hear you !'

'Well, what if they do ?' said Dick, somewhat testily—'Aunty, you're allers wipin' a fellow up in the middle of his fun because you're afraid of the people in the house. I've said two or three times, and now I say it agin, d——n the people in the house !'

'It's all very well for you to rant and roar like a wild Indian,' replied Estelle, in a severe tone, 'because you've got nothing to lose by it ; but if you had the fear of being turned into the street before your eyes, as we have, for inability to pay your rent, you would perhaps be as anxious to act the part of a still tenant as I am. I tell you once for all, Dick, it won't do,' she continued, her anger increasing with each word, 'you've been partly the means of having us turned out of two places already, and now you must learn to conduct yourself differently, or else keep away from us.'

'I can agree to that last thing easy enough,' said the boy, quite independently, as he arose to his feet and made ready to depart—'I don't see what I've kept hanging around you so long for anyhow—I ain't made anything by it. Every lay you've put me onto has failed, and takin' it altogether I kind'er think you've been the gainer by our 'quaintance.'

He approached the door to depart, but Kate, who saw that Estelle had gone too far, called him back—

'Holt on a bit, Dick,' she said soothingly, 'sure, it's ownly funnin' the misthress is—don't be vexed, that's a good filly, bud sit down and have a dhrop o' gin.'

Estelle struggled hard with her passion, but she got the better of it at last, and said in as mild a tone as she could assume—

‘Yes, sit down, Dick, and don’t be angry—the fact is, I’m about half crazy thinking what we shall do for a place to put our heads in, and I don’t actually know what I’m saying, half the time.’

This conciliatory speech satisfied the boy, and resuming his seat he said—

‘Well look here, Aunt, I’ll tell you what I’ll do with you. I know a gallus room I can get for you down town. To be sure the families wot lives in the house ain’t quite so airish as them wot lives in this, but what’s the use o’ livin’ where you can’t say nothin’? There you can fight, dance, sing, laugh, and break things if you’ve a mind to, and if you’ll move there I’ll get the place for you to-morrow. What d’yer say?’

‘Perhaps I can’t do better,’ replied Estelle, ‘so I’ll take it.’

‘’Nuf said!’ replied Dick, ‘now then, Kate, fetch along the gin!’

‘Well, thin,’ replied that interesting damsel, who had already brought the junk bottle forth from the closet, and was holding it up between herself and the light, ‘well, thin, the divil a wan dhrap there’s in it at all, and me thinkin’ it full all the time!’

‘O, me eye!’ exclaimed Dick, ‘you can’t come that over me! You knew it was empty well enough, when you invited me to drink. Here—go and get it filled,’ he continued, as he threw her a shilling, ‘and when you come back and we take a drink all round, I’ll tell you what I was laughing at when I came in.’

Kate did not wait to deny Dick’s accusation concerning the bottle, but was off like a flash, and soon returned with the poisonous liquid, of which all three immediately partook, and then the hopeful Dick, taking a big chew of tobacco, and throwing one leg over the other, said to Estelle—

'Now, I'm a goin' to tell you a good joke—that is, I consider it a good joke now, although it might a' turned out a very serious one. This mornin' I was a walkin' along Nassau street, thinkin' about nothin' in partic'lar, 'cos I wasn't on any lay, when all at once my eye fell onto just the edge of a wallet a stickin' out o' the overcoat side pocket of an old gentleman jest ahead o' me. Now you know I don't often attempt that kind o' business 'cos it's out o' my partick'ler line, but the wallet looked so temptin' I couldn't help tetchin' the old fellow, so I made a pint for it, but I hadn't no sooner got my fingers onto it than he had me by the collar. I tried the jerk dodge first, to get away, but he hung onto me like a vice, and when I found I couldn't break his hold, I made up my mind to come the innocent dodge over him. So I come one o' my pitiful mugs, but when I turned it up at him, I hope to be shot if I wasn't nearly struck dumb at first to see a countenance what I'd seen before under very pecooliar circumstances. Now who do you think it was?' and as he asked the question he pursed up his mouth as if to say, 'you couldn't tell to save your life.'

'The divil a wan o' me knows!' said Kate.

'I can't imagine!' replied Estelle.

'Nobody else but old Emory!' continued the boy.

'Indeed!' cried Estelle, over whose face instantly stole an expression of mingled suspicion and fear, 'and how did you get away from him?'

'O, you needn't be alarmed, Aunty,' replied Dick, in a tone which immediately reassured her, 'I never peach—besides I had no occasion to even if that had been my game, for the moment I told him my name, whatever the reason was, he seemed to soften in a minute, and between you and me, it's my opinion he knows the old woman.'

'Why, you wasn't foolish enough to give him your right name, was you?' questioned Estelle in some astonishment.

‘Of course I was,’ answered Dick, ‘I allers gives it to anybody that axes for it—and I’ve got reason to be proud of it, too—I’ve been pulled half a dozen times and I’ve never been jugged yet. Every time the jury acquits me, it seems as if every man of ’em stuck a knife a-piece into the old Recorder, it hurts him so because he can’t have the luxury of sentencing me. ‘Well, Richard,’ he says every time, same as if he’d knode me from a baby, ‘you’ve escaped again, but we’ll have you next time!’ ‘Walker!’ thinks I, as I walks out of the court with flyin’ colors, but I don’t say anything. Who wouldn’t be proud of such a name as Dick Waffles, I’d like to know?’

‘Well, you didn’t tell him anything more than that, did you?’ questioned Estelle.

‘No,’ answered Dick, ‘he wanted to know where I lived, and as I couldn’t think of any other place just at the time, I gave him old Auntie Cross’s number, and if he goes there to enquire for me, the probability is he’ll get his head broke before he can reach the street, for the old woman goes crazy at hearin’ my name mentioned since I half blowed her head off one night by half fillin’ her pipe with powder, and then covering it over with tobacco. O, wouldn’t I like to be in one corner and hear Emory ask the old woman if she knew me! I’d risk bein’ sent to the State Prison jist to see the way she’d walk into his affections! Ha! ha! that would be better than a play! Ha! ha!’ and Dick laughed himself out of breath.

After his cachinatory fit was over, Estelle remarked carelessly—

‘Speaking of Emory, Dick, Kate has learned this morning from his kitchen wench, whom she met in the grocery, that he is the only man in the house. Hollowell having gone out of town on business.’

A silence of some moments ensued, when suddenly Dick clapped his hands together and exclaimed, excitedly—

‘By ——! It would be a glorious thing if I could succeed

in robbing him to-night after having failed in picking his pocket this morning! I'll try it, if I die for it!

'You have not much time to spare then, in which to make your arrangements,' suggested Estelle.

'That's a fact!' exclaimed Dick, 'so I'll be off at once. I expect to find the boys I want to help me at the house down town which I spoke of, and if you say so I'll engage a room for you to night and you can go in to-morrow.'

'Very well,' replied Estelle, 'do so. I suppose I shall have to leave here to-morrow whether I like it or not.'

'Well, then, good bye,' said Dick, and after taking another pull at the gin-bottle he departed.

'Now then,' said Estelle, with an air of triumph, after he had departed, 'if Emory has him arrested and succeeds in sending him for a term of years to the State Prison, I shall not have labored entirely in vain, but if he should chance to kill him—O, that is too much fortune to hope for—that would indeed be exquisite.'

## CHAPTER XXVII.

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LET us now return to Emory, whom we left on his way home. He walked along pondering on the strange events of the day, and when about half way home it occurred to him that the street in which Dick had told him he lived was directly in his route, and he determined to stop and ascertain whether the youngster had played him false, or whether he had actually told him the truth regarding his residence. It was anything but a respectable neighborhood to which he had been directed, but Emory combatted the dust, and dirt, and offensive smells which assailed him at every step till at length he came to the number designated by Dick, in front of which he drew up, and began to reconnoitre. It was a miserable, little dilapidated frame-building, with scarcely a whole window-pane in it, and the want of glass was supplied by every imaginable variety of rags, old hats, paper, etc., etc. A sign (evidently of home manufacture) over the door of the first story, informed the passers-by (that is, such as could read it) that Mrs. Bridget Cross kept a wholesale and retail grocery, wine and liquor store. A row of six junk bottles stood in the window, upon the top of every other one of which was placed

a lemon of questionable freshness—five or six suspicious-looking kegs were ranged upon a shelf directly behind a shabby counter, upon which stood a filthy-looking pitcher with a piece broken out of the side, half a dozen tumblers, not one of which was whole, and a crazy-looking sugar-bowl—an old rickety table stood in front of the door, upon which were two heads of wilted cabbage, and a barrel half full of rusty-looking corned pork completed the stock of the establishment—that is, all of it which was visible—what cartloads of provisions and tuns of choice liquors Mrs. Cross might have stowed away in the cellar nobody knew, nor we guess, did anybody care to know. A huge tin sign about in the middle of the house denoted that the upper story was devoted to boarders, and as there must have been at least three rooms on the floor, it is highly probable that the gentlemen choosing that establishment for a stopping-place were numerous, and that a flourishing business in the boarding line was done there.

As Emory viewed the suspicious-looking abode and hesitated as to whether he should go in or not, he was observed by Mrs. Bridget Cross, the landlady, who at once set him down as a ‘murderin’ informer.’ She had been forced to pay a fine once for selling liquor without a license, which piece of bad luck she owed to the officiousness of a clerical individual residing in her neighborhood, and this circumstance led her to regard with suspicion every individual habited, as Emory happened to be, in a suit of black with white neckerchief. ‘Let him come in,’ muttered Mrs. Cross to herself as she watched him from the back of the shop. ‘I have me license now, thank God, so let him come in, an’ see iv I don’t put a flea in his ear!’

Hardly had she uttered the threat when Emory did venture within the door. He had made up his mind that there could be no harm in his asking a question, so, regarding Mrs. Cross with the haughty, self-sufficient air characteristic of him, he said, in an awfully severe tone—

‘Old woman, do you keep this house, or rather, I should say this den?’

‘Din, is it, ye thunderin’ ould thief o’ the world?’ replied Mrs. Cross, whose eyes flashed fire, and the end of whose little pug nose seemed to curl upward with rage. ‘Do I kape tho *din*? Fhat would ye give to know, ye conshumin’ ould vill-yan?’

‘Come, come!’ exclaimed Emory, threateningly, ‘no such language as that to me, or I’ll have you in the hands of the police before you know what you’re about!’

‘Ye will, eh?’ exclaimed Mrs. Cross, triumphantly. ‘Do it, ye hoary-headed ould butthermilk beggar! Let’s see ye do it! Ye may take the best glass o’ the licker in the house (and the worst is too good for the likes o’ ye) iv ye’ll ownly do it, ye dirty ould vagabone!’

Emory now began to see that he had gone the wrong way to work to gain any information. He had thought to frighten the woman at once with a magisterial frown, but failing in that, he knew he could accomplish nothing unless he could manage to allay the old landlady’s awakened wrath. He was the more anxious to do this, because he now felt satisfied from the displeasure evinced by the old woman, that she kept a sort of *fence* shop, and having Dick and his mother for boarders was fearful lest he might be after some information calculated to injure her business. So approaching her, he changed his frowning face to a bland expression of countenance, and said in an undertone—

‘It’s all right—you needn’t be afraid—I know all about it, but I won’t say anything.’

‘Won’t ye?’ exclaimed Mrs. Cross, growing more wrathful than ever—‘well, thin, that I mayn’t sin, bud that’s kind o’ ye! d’ye see this?’ she continued, as she raised a pail that stood at her side full of dirty slops, ‘iv ye ain’t out o’ this quicker nor a hunted flea hops, I hould ye for a naggin I’ll spile yer fine clothes, ye hypocritical ould haythen! Are ye goin’ or

not?' and she raised the pail which she poised by the handle and the chine at the bottom preparatory to throwing it.

'I tell you it's all right,' persisted Emory, emphatically—'if you know anything about Dick and his mother you need not keep it from me, for I know more about them perhaps than you do, and I'm a friend of Dick's—if you ask him he'll tell you so.'

'You don't say so!' sneered Mrs. Cross in a tone of mock surprise, 'an' maybe ye'll tell me what Dick ye'll be maning?'

'Why Dick Waffles!' said Emory, impatiently, 'you know well enough!'

'Is it Dick Waffles, the thafe!' almost screamed Mrs. Cross.

'Why yes, certainly—to be sure it is!' answered Emory.

'An' are you a frind o' his?' questioned the landlady.

'Why of course I am,' answered Emory, 'one of the best friends he's got.'

'Thin take that an' be d——d to ye, for a hang-gallows rash-kill!' shouted Mrs. Cross, and as she spoke, she let Emory have the contents of the dirty slop-pail full in the face. Nor did she stop here, for as he essayed to take forth his handkerchief, with which it was his purpose to wipe the dirty liquid from his eyes, nose, and mouth, she seized a broomstick which stood handy, and uttering a regular Irish war-howl, she advanced to the attack. 'Arrah, musha, big bad luck to the likes o' ye!' she cried, as she proceeded to lay the domestic weapon across his shoulders, and then raising her voice still higher, as her excitement increased with each vigorous blow she struck, she shouted for her body-guard—'Och, Pathrick! Dinnis! Pather!' she yelled, 'sure there's a thafe in the house! a thafe that 'ud sthale your mither's cha-rac-ther! So kem and help me bate him!'

Emory did not wait for a reinforcement to arrive, but beat a hasty retreat, and it was well for him that he did so, for it was not long before three pairs of stalwart arms arrived upon

the scene of action, and had he not taken himself off as speedily as he did, it is altogether likely that his face as well as his clothes would have been spoiled. His first impulse when he had got so far from the scene of his discomfiture as to consider it safe to stop and reflect, was to have the old woman arrested for the assault, but then he remembered the circumstances which brought the affair about, and thinking that a full examination of the case before a magistrate might lead to an unpleasant cross-examination as far as he himself was concerned, he wisely decided to pocket his injuries, and trust to luck for revenge at some future time. Having come to this conclusion he took his way home dispirited and full of wrath.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

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WHEN Emory reached home after the rough treatment which he had received at the hands of Mrs. Cross, he took his way to his library, and having divested himself of his coat and boots, he drew on his dressing gown and encased his feet in a pair of slippers, after which he drew an easy chair up in front of the grate, in which a bright, cheerful fire was burning, and placing his feet upon the fender, he began to cogitate upon the events of the day.

I suppose I'm indebted to old Mother Waffles for the

mauling which that wild Irish beast gave me,' he muttered; 'no doubt she boards in that den, and expected from what that hopeful youth told her that I would be after her. She owes me a grudge, I suppose, for having withdrawn my patronage from her years ago, and allowed her to go to the devil her own way—but I'll be even with her! I'll have her on the Island again before she's a week older!'

Having derived some little consolation from this reflection, he arose from his seat and touched a bell pull. The call was soon answered by a black female domestic—the only human being in the house beside himself—who, sticking her woolly head in at the door enquired—

'Did you ring, sar? Does yer want me?'

'Yes,' snarled Emory, petulantly, 'come in and shut the door!'

The servant entered the room, followed by a singular looking little dog—jet black, and so fat as to be scarcely able to waddle—which, unperceived by her, had followed her from the kitchen.

'How often have I told you,' said Emory, glad to be able to find something upon which to vent his ill-humor, 'to kick that ugly looking cur into the street? Get out!' he continued, as he raised one of his boots and threw it with all his force at the unfortunate animal, which, shivering with fright, was crouching at the feet of its mistress. The heel of the boot took effect upon the head of the poor brute, which gave expression to its pain by a series of violent yelps.

'Oh, don't hurt the dog, massa Emory,' pleaded the black woman, as she stood before her pet to shield him from a second assault threatened by Emory, and then adroitly opened the door, and allowed the abused quadruped to make his escape.

'I see how it is,' growled Emory, wrathfully, 'I'll have to serve that dog as I served your spiteful-looking cat which was

so fond of staring at me with its great impudent-looking eyes—cover it with camphene and then set it on fire! Nothing like that for ridding the house of such pests! What do you want such a scurvy looking brute around you for, eh?”

‘Why, Massa Emory,’ expostulated the wench, ‘Joe amn’t scurvy—Joe one ob de cleanest dogs in de ’varsal world! an’ I keep him ’round me case I like him—and de reason dat I like him am case he like me.’

‘Bah!’ exclaimed Emory, in a tone of disgust, ‘well, don’t you let me catch him in this room again, or I’ll roast him alive—mind that! Has any one been here to day?’

‘No sah,’ answered the wench.

‘Have you seen any suspicious looking characters prowling around the house?’ asked Emory.

‘No, sar—ain’t seed nobody ’t all,’ answered the wench in a somewhat sulky tone, ‘I’s bin bissy in de kitchen all day iernin.’

‘Well, get out!’ snarled Emory, ‘I don’t want you any longer!’

Without replying, the wench vanished immediately, and at the foot of the first flight of stairs, she encountered her canine friend who lay there waiting for her, and who wagged his tail and licked her hand joyfully as she stooped down to pat his head—‘Poor Joe!’ she exclaimed, in a tone full of sympathy, ‘Put de kamphene on *you*, eh, honey? Let him do it if he dars! Jes’ let him do it once, dat’s all!’ and she took her way to the kitchen closely followed by Joe, who whined in answer to her expressions of condolence as though he understood every word which she was saying.

Ater she had gone, Emory arose from his seat and approaching a pistol case which stood upon the mantel-piece he opened it and drew forth a pair of duelling pistols—these he carefully examined, and then apparently well satisfied with his scrutiny he placed them back again, observing as he did so, ‘all right! I have never known them to miss fire yet, and

it will be singular if there is not at least one burglar less in the world to-night if I should change to be molested, an event the occurrence of which I begin very much to doubt.'

Taking up the first book which came to hand, he read till summoned to tea by the black woman. After swallowing a cup of the beverage he gave the old negress particular instructions to be careful about locking all the doors, and charged her on no account to admit anybody during his absence, and then lighting a cigar, he sallied forth and took his way towards a fashionable gambling hell which he was in the habit occasionally of visiting. Having reached there he attempted to enter into the game, but it had lost its usual attractions for him, for his mind was ill at ease notwithstanding his strenuous efforts to drive the subject of the threatened burglary from his mind, and at about ten o'clock he returned home, and entering his library, he seated himself at his writing desk and began penning a letter of instructions to Hollowell, concerning some swindling transaction in which they were engaged.

The sky had threatened a storm all the evening, and as Emory settled himself to his task, a fine sleet mingled with hail and snow came pattering against the window-panes, driven by a violent wind which seemed to increase in fierceness with each blast, till at length it whistled furiously through every vent-hole and seemed to shake the building to its foundation in its mad fury.

While Emory wrote, he would pause occasionally, and listen intently as a violent gust would rattle the closed shutters of the rooms below, and once or twice he took the lamp in his hand and went down stairs to satisfy himself that everything was right. At length he finished his letter, and having folded, sealed, and superscribed it, he threw it upon the desk, and drawing himself up in front of the fire he disposed himself to listen. As he did so the clock struck the hour of twelve.

'Twelve o'clock,' he muttered, 'and if my thieving friends intend to pay me a visit to-night, they will soon be here.'

Whew !' he continued, as the wind, in its tornado-like fury, rushed along under the eaves of the house, howling like a thousand spirits of evil in concert, 'this is a splendèd night for their operations, but not a very agreeable one for a promenade. Let me see—I don't believe they'll venture to approach if they see a light burning, and as I am somewhat anxious to know if any attempt is really intended or not, I think I'll just take my barkers upon my lap, extinguish the light, and remain quiet awhile.'

He did so, and nearly an hour passed by before anything occurred to excite his attention, when just as he was about falling into a doze, he was startled by a slight noise, proceeding apparently from the basement.

Taking a pistol in each hand, he arose from his seat, and noiselessly opening the door of the room which he was in, he groped his way cautiously along the entry till he reached the stairs, and then proceeded on tip-toe towards the basement-door, just before reaching which he stumbled against something which had been left in the way, and came near falling. He recovered himself, however, and paused within a few feet of the door to listen. At first, he heard nothing, and began to think that his imagination might have led him astray, when a sound, as of suppressed whispering, caught his ear, and he edged nearer towards the door and laid his ear against it.

'I tell you I heard something,' whispered a voice.

'O, the devil's grandmother !' whispered another in response. 'You're allers a hearin somethin' ! You heard a cat jump, I s'pose. Keep on usin' your brace and bit, Alec : get a few holes inter this pannel and we can soon shove it through ; and if we don't make free with the old feller's plate then, it'll be our fault.'

'If you get possession of any property of mine,' thought Emory, as he levelled the pistol in the right hand as nearly as he could guess, directly at the spot from whence the whispering proceeded, 'you must find it in h—ll !' and as the impious

thought passed through his mind, he fixed both his pistols in quick succession. A deep groan, and an exclamation of 'By —— ! Dick's shot !' followed the last report, and instantly the robbers fled, bearing their wounded companion with them.

'Ha ! ha !' chuckled Emory, as he groped his way up stairs, 'you'll make free with the old fellow's plate, will you ? I hope carrying it won't tire you ! Ha ! ha ! Then I was correctly informed, after all. I hope I shot two of them ! I trust there was no ammunition wasted !' and amid such exclamations as these, he reached his library and struck a light, after which he proceeded to the room occupied by the black house-keeper, for the purpose of arousing her ; but Joe, her canine pet, who shared her apartment, had saved him that trouble, and he found her just about descending to learn the cause of the noise.

'Bress de Lord, Massa Emory !' she exclaimed with a look of terror, as she regarded the stern-browed man, 'wot de matter, eh ? Who bin firin' de pistils dis time o' night ?'

'None of your business !' was the quick and angry reply. 'I want you to post yourself down in the basement, and stay there till daylight, and if you hear anything stirring around the house, call me, d'you hear ?'

'Yes, massa,' answered the negress, now dreadfully frightened, 'but ——'

'I don't want any buts !' exclaimed Emory, wrathfully, 'go and do as I tell you, or else bundle out of the house at once ! It's a fine night for exercise outside, and perhaps you'd rather walk about the streets than sit by a good fire. Come, move ! Do one or the other.'

'Yes, massa, I'se a-gwine,' said the poor creature, as she tremblingly descended the stairs.

'And turn that whelp into the street !' exclaimed the heartless man, as Joe, who had flew down the stairs as soon as he caught sight of Emory, set up a loud barking for his mistress.

‘Can’t turn Joe out in de street sich a night as dis!’ expostulated the poor woman, ‘he freeze to def!’

‘Well, so much the better,’ exclaimed Emory, passionately, ‘let him freeze to death! Do you think I am to be kept awake by his infernal barking?’

‘Joe keep still soon’s I get down dar ’long wid him,’ said the woman.

‘Do you stop to bandy words with me, you black devil!’ cried Emory, furiously. ‘Either turn that cur out, or else clear out yourself and take him with you!’

‘Well, de Lord nose,’ said the poor creature, as the tears sprang into her eyes, ‘it am a mighty hard matter for poor colored woman like me to git ’long in de world widout no home, an’ I doesn’t know what I shill de wiv myself to-night out in de storm, but if poor Joe goes, I must go ’long wiv him. Joe’s de o’ny friend I’s got in de wide world, and ’long as he lives I’ll stick by him, if I die for it. So if you’ll let me git my little bundel ob close, I’ll go!’

‘Just like a nigger!’ snarled Emory, petulantly; ‘one can never get them to do as one wishes!’ He did not wish to lose the services of the woman just at that particular moment, however, and thought it best to let her have her own way; so he continued, ‘Well, you may keep the dog, but mind you if he awakens me with his cursed noise, I’ll go down and roast him before your eyes!’ and having delivered himself of this heartless threat, he went to bed very well satisfied with his night’s work.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

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OF all places in the world the pawnbroker's shop is the most gloomy, for it is the grave of buried hopes, the scene of blighted prospects, the last resort of the heart-crushed but honest artizan and the sorrowing needle-woman, as well as of the profligate spendthrift and the abandoned prostitute.

In the pawnbroker's shop is never to be found a 'beggarly account of empty boxes,' for the dust-covered pigeon-holes which stretch the whole length of the room behind the counter of the sombre-looking and musty smelling apartment, are literally crammed with parcels each one of which contains a lamentable history of its own. It has been often said that it 'takes all sorts of characters to make a world,' and it may with equal truth be said that it 'takes all sorts of property to make a pawnbroker's shop.' In it may be found the rich dress of the flaunting frail one and the more humble habili-ment of the needy sempstress—the starving mechanic's tool-box and the gambler's flashy wardrobe—the widow's wedding-ring and the failing courtesan's jewels—the poor student's most valued volume and the unfortunate drunkard's last shirt—trinkets held sacred as parting gifts—mementoes of the dead which nothing but the terrible fear of starvation

could have induced their owners to relinquish if only for an hour—miniatures of deceased friends—husbands, lovers, brothers, fathers, mothers, wives, sweethearts or sisters—the implements of every imaginable trade and calling—wearing apparel of every description, even to an actor's wardrobe—in short, every thing that constitutes property, from a tooth-pick to a steam engine—from a baby's rattle to a full-jewelled watch—from a child's pinafore to a thousand dollar shawl.

We believe that a pawnbroker—that is, a thorough-going, enthusiastic pawnbroker—must be fitted by nature for his business—for no amount of practice—no length of time—could fit an ordinary man to witness, day after day, what the pawnbroker witnesses, and live through it. And the reason of this is not, perhaps, because the pawnbroker is destitute of feeling, but because he does not stop to think—it is not his business to think, but to loan money at an exorbitant rate of interest, upon the various articles offered. A pale, emaciated, sickly-looking woman, scantily clothed, enters the shop, and tremblingly offers for the monied man's inspection a small gold locket. She has visited him often before—he has in his possession various articles belonging to her, which she has parted with for less than half their value, and he feels sure she will never redeem them—her bosom throbs tumultuously, and the scalding tears chase each other down her wan cheeks as she parts with the locket but he cannot see these evidences of

‘The heart bowed down with weight of woe—’

not he—he can only see in her a good customer—so he deposits the locket upon a shelf, the starving creature departs, and he is ready for the next customer.

Now, to an ordinary man such an incident would furnish matter for painful reflection. In the case of the woman mentioned he might perhaps in imagination follow her to her wretched abode—a miserable attic room, or perhaps a damp and ill-ventilated cellar—where two or three fatherless and famishing children awaited, with painful anxiety, her return—

he might picture to himself the scene which immediately followed her appearance among them. How they eagerly flew at the loaf of bread which she had purchased while on her way home, and tearing it to pieces proceeded voraciously to devour it, while she looked on with streaming eyes and a heart full of agony. How she sighed to think that she had parted with the last article of value she possessed in the world—an article, too, as dear to her almost as life itself—and how she trembled at the reflection that when the money she had obtained upon it was gone, her little ones must starve unless she received aid from some quarter—how she distractedly paced up and down her wretched apartment, and thought of destroying herself and them—and then, as the terrible wickedness of such a thought flashed athwart her excited mind, how she dropped upon her knees, and raising her eyes to Heaven, ejaculated, ‘How long, O, God! how long!’

One morning shortly after the events detailed in the previous chapter, a well-dressed, middle-aged gentleman was proceeding leisurely up Chatham street, looking around him upon every side with the curiosity natural to a stranger, when suddenly an article in the window of a pawnbroker’s shop arrested his attention, and drawing himself up in front of it, he scrutinized it carefully for a while, and then entered the shop. It was quite early in the morning, and the patrons of the establishment had not yet begun to make their appearance.

Walking up to the counter, the gentleman, in a bland, affable tone of voice, enquired if the lady’s miniature in the window was on sale?

‘Well, the time ain’t run out yet,’ was the answer, ‘but I s’pose I can sell it, for I don’t believe it will ever be called for—the person that left it never does call for anything she leaves, and if she did call for it and it was gone I don’t s’pose she’d make much fuss about it.’

‘Did the original of the picture herself leave it here?’ questioned the gentleman with some anxiety.

‘O, no,’ was the answer, ‘the *original* of it is sick, and a companion of her’s—an Irish girl—left it here.’

‘Can you tell me where she lives?’ asked the gentleman.

‘Yes,’ answered the pawnbroker, ‘I ain’t exactly satisfied about some of the articles the girl has left here, and I took down her address for fear of accidents. Here it is,’ he continued, as he scratched it upon a piece of paper and handed it to the gentleman, who after some further talk struck a bargain for the miniature, which the pawnbroker took from the window and was about handing over, when another individual who had been looking at it from the outside, entered the shop, just as the gentleman first mentioned was about depositing the article in his pocket.

‘May I make so bold as to ask,’ said the new comer addressing the possessor of the picture, ‘whether you are related to the original of that miniature?’

‘First let me enquire,’ returned the gentleman, ‘your motive for asking the question?’

‘I cannot explain my motive,’ was the reply, ‘till you have answered my interrogatory. Everything depends upon that. If you are the lady’s husband, or brother, I have no explanation to make—if, on the contrary, you are not related to her by ties of blood, then I think I have the best right to her likeness.’

‘That may or may not be,’ answered the gentleman, determinedly—‘I cannot tell what your claims upon the lady may be, but I know I have been acquainted with her from childhood, and feel a great interest in her welfare. I also know that she is sick and destitute, and I shall keep her portrait, which I have redeemed, till I see her—if she is then satisfied that you should have it I have no objection. May I enquire your name and the nature of your claims upon the lady?’

‘O, yes,’ was the answer, ‘my name is Camp, Francis Camp, of New Orleans, and the lady is indebted to me for sums loaned

to a considerable amount. And now having satisfied you perhaps I may ask your name?’

‘Certainly,’ answered the gentleman, with affability, ‘my name is Philip Tieman, merchant, of St. Louis. But come,’ he continued suddenly, and with energy, ‘the object of our solicitude is in great distress, and even while we are talking here she may be dying. I have her address—let us wait upon her.’

‘With all my heart!’ exclaimed Camp, and leaving the shop, they took their way towards Mulberry street.

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## CHAPTER XL.

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WE have now reached that point in our story where we left Estelle (for she it was) lying upon a sick bed in a wretched hovel—the abode which Dick Waffles had secured for her on the night of his last rash adventure. It was about a week after the attempted burglary, that Harry —— was led to her bedside by Fred Fox, the policeman, and after the sudden flight of Kate O'Donnell and the departure of Fred, at Harry's request, the latter stood gazing upon the face of the sick woman, seemingly uncertain as to whether he was awake or dreaming. He could scarcely credit that the emaciated, wrinkled, miserable creature before him was the same being whom he had years before known as the bright and beautiful Estelle Grant, while she, on her part, seemed to shrink within herself as she met his look of mingled grief and astonishment. She would rather have met any man in the world than him,

for shame was not entirely dead within her, and abject as she was she remembered that she was once guileless and innocent, and that he had known and loved her at such a time.

The fit of abstraction into which Harry had fallen as he looked at her, was at length broken by Estelle, who, turning her glassy eyes full upon him, remarked—

‘You are the only man in the world whose presence could have awakened such feelings within me as I have for a few moments past experienced, and had I not heard years ago that you were dead, it is not likely that we should now have met—however, as we have met, this is no time for vain regrets or useless sensitiveness—so I will stifle all such feelings, and come at once to the statement which I wish to make.’

She paused to take breath, when Harry, in a tone of wonderment, remarked, apparently more to himself than to her—

‘How is it possible that a lady of taste, refinement, and noble qualities, could fall from her high estate so low as this?’

‘How is it possible?’ answered Estelle, her eyes sparkling with the fire of anger as she spoke; ‘have you lived till your time of life to seriously ask such a question as that? There was a time when *I* could have asked that question, and sought in my own mind in vain for a reply—but there is no mystery about it *now*—it is as plain as the noonday sun. How is it possible?’ she repeated, with energy, ‘ask of the seared heart, once pure, unspotted and joyous—possessing the wealth of innocence and contentment—the heart that, once young and fresh, was sold for gold, and by the damning blight of that accursed sale was rendered obdurate and hard—the heart whose dearest affections were by fraud and treachery taken from the youth to whom they were freely given, and transferred to the keeping of a human tiger, making prostitution of what should have been marriage, and hell of what should have been a heaven! Or take a walk among the daughters of toil, and ask the question of the suffering heart which hopes against hope. Ask the bright-eyed and rosy-cheeked maiden

## THE LOST WIFE.

who strives honestly to get a living by toiling late and early, why her cheeks grow pale and her eyes lose their lustre—and when she finds, in spite of all her exertions to preserve an honest name, that men with heaps of wealth, but no brains and less humanity, consider her morals loose because she is a working girl—when she finds that they condemn in her the very thing which they should most admire—ask her why her ideas of virtue alter, and her heart loses its purity! How is it possible? Man's inhumanity makes it possible!

The wretched creature ceased to speak on account of exhaustion, and as she lay panting for breath, Harry took occasion to caution her in a kindly tone against giving way to her feelings.

'O, it will be all the same in a few hours hence,' she said, when she had so far recovered as to be able to speak—'I have not long to stay here, and I may as well make the best use of my time. By this hour to-morrow I shall be cheek by jowl with Satan!' and she uttered a laugh which made the blood curdle in the veins of her listener, who in the hope of changing the dark current of her thoughts, remarked—

'Do not indulge in such horrible conceits, my dear madam, but let your mind dwell upon the mercy instead of the wrath of Deity. It is never too late to repent.'

'Repent!' exclaimed the sick woman, in a tone of surprise, 'who said anything about repenting? I have no desire to repent. I feel satisfied that even hell must be preferable to this earth, and I am not afraid to go there. The Devil was at my bedside all night last night, and the bargain between us is concluded. I assure you that he is not such a bad sort of person after all, when compared with a certain individual whom I could name. Do you know Everard Emory?' she ended abruptly.

'I have no personal acquaintance with him,' answered Harry, 'but I know his history pretty well since his marriage with you. He lives in this city now.'

‘I am aware of the fact,’ remarked Estelle, quietly.

‘And does he know what an awful situation you are in?’ enquired Harry.

‘No,’ was the reply, ‘he does not know at present whether I am living or dead, but he shall know soon. I have a surprise for him. And now,’ she continued, ‘before I proceed to give you the incidents of my life, have the kindness to take the key which you will find beneath my pillow and open yonder trunk. You will find in the right-hand corner writing materials, together with a sealed packet. This last I wish you would direct to Mrs. — Wallace, who lives in the town of —, State of Connecticut, and if you would oblige me so much I wish you would take it to the Post-office at once.’

‘But it would not be right to leave you alone,’ said Harry, ‘you might die in my absence for want of assistance.’

‘There is no danger,’ was the confident reply of Estelle, ‘I have been left alone for hours together since I was first taken so ill, and you will be gone at most but a few minutes—besides, I need rest, for talking has somewhat fatigued me.’

Re-assured by the confident manner in which she spoke, Harry superscribed the packet as requested, and started with it to the Post-office. He was not gone long, and when he returned he was gratified to find the patient much stronger than when he left her.

‘Now,’ she said, ‘I have one more request to make; please write a note to Emory stating that I am on my death-bed, and add that I have some revealments to make which are of vital importance to him. This you can safely send, as it is of no value, by any one of the ragged children who are playing in the court. A promise of sixpence will secure the services of any of them.’

This request was also complied with, and then Estelle, stopping at intervals, to regain strength, related to her eager listener without reservation, every incident of her eventful life.

The shades of night were gathering fast when she had fin-

ished the narration, and Harry, at her request, lighted the remains of a candle which was sticking in a bottle standing upon a stool. He then thought it time to take his departure, and turning to Estelle, he said—

‘I shall have to leave you now, but it is not right that you should remain alone, and I will send somebody to stay by you during the night.’

‘That will be useless,’ she replied feebly, ‘I have not many hours longer to stay on earth, but I shall not die till I see *him*—I am confident of that! He must be here before a great while, and I wish you could be present at our interview. He is a violent man when his passion is aroused, and he might kill me before I finish what I have to say to him.’

Harry was about to reply when the door opened, and Philip Tieman and Frank Camp entered the apartment, and walking up to the invalid’s bed both gazed fixedly at her for some moments without speaking.

The young man knew not what to make of this abrupt intrusion on the part of the strangers, and he was about to question them when his attention was arrested by the expression of mingled surprise and mortification which rested upon the features of Estelle as she gazed at and finally evidently recognized them.

‘I wonder who else of my acquaintances of bye-gone days will visit me,’ she said at length, an air of reckless hardihood taking the place of the painful surprise which she had at first manifested, ‘before it will please Death to release my soul from this detestable prison-house of clay! Have you brought any of your rich relatives, Philip Tieman, or your exclusive and fastidious St. Louis friends to witness this last scene in a life drama? If so, show them in at once. This is a glorious reception room! One fit for a Queen to enter! And rare guests are present, too! Unseen, perhaps, but still present! and among them are two crowned heads—King Death and

King Belzebub !' and a smile of extreme bitterness rested upon her corpse-like features.

The person addressed, closing his eyes as if to shut out the piteous spectacle, shuddered perceptibly and could only ejaculate—' Can this be real ?'

' And you, Frank Camp,' continued the dying woman, turning her eyes with a look of scorn upon that individual, ' have you come in the hope of recovering the amount of my indebtedness to you ? Ha ! ha ! I can't pay you in cash, but I will make you my heir ! I will leave you sole possessor of all this magnificent furniture ! Or if that will not do, I will now redeem the promise which I made and elope with you ! Bring your carriage !—I am ready ! Here are rare charms for you !' and raising her skinny arms she held them towards him and laughed derisively.

' This is too horrible !' said Camp, as he shudderingly gazed upon the unearthly features of Estelle ; and then without addressing a word to her, he turned upon his heel and left the apartment.

' Can I do anything for you, Estelle ?' asked Philip Tieman, as he advanced a step nearer and bent over the invalid.

' Yes,' she answered promptly, ' you can do me a very great favor'—then looking spitefully at him, she continued, ' begone, instantly, and do not torture me longer with your unwelcome presence !'

He was about to offer a remark in the way of expostulation, but she would not listen to him—

' Begone !' she cried, ' if you would not have me curse you ! Reply is unnecessary ! Leave me !'

And perceiving that any attempt to reason with the frail creature would be useless, Philip Tieman took his departure and Estelle and Harry were once more left alone.

A whole day in the miserable abode had sickened Harry, and he was anxious to get away, but at Estelle's urgent request he decided to wait awhile, and had just told her so

When a heavy footstep was heard in the paved court outside, and the next moment a knock was heard at the door

‘Come in!’ cried Harry, when the door slowly opened, and Emory, peering suspiciously around the gloomy apartment, entered. He was afraid when he received the note that some treachery was intended, but every doubt vanished when he observed that his wife was really lying at death’s door, and that nobody save Harry, (whom he knew from report to be a reputable man) was present.

Approaching the bed of the sick woman, a sardonic grin overspread his face as he remarked, in a tone of savage joy which he found it impossible to conceal—

So, madam, you have sent for me to seek my forgiveness for the many wrongs which you have heaped upon me, eh? There is nothing like a death-bed to bring such malicious jades as you to their senses! Come, what have you got to say that concerns me? Out with it quick, if it’s anything of importance, or the devil will claim his own before you have an opportunity of unburthening yourself.’

‘Feelingless man!’ interposed Harry, stepping forward, ‘do not torture an already dying woman—if you can do nothing but upbraid her, listen in silence to what she has to say.’

‘And who are you,’ asked Emory, sneeringly, ‘that you presume to dictate to an injured husband the course which he should pursue with a guilty wife? Begone, sir! We can get along here without your company!’

‘Mrs. Emory,’ replied Harry, ‘has requested me to stay, and until she withdraws that request I shall do so.’

‘I have a confession to make,’ said Estelle, in a tremulous tone, ‘and it is my wish that Mr. —— should hear it.’

‘Then, if he must stay, let Mr. —— hold his peace,’ growled Emory, ‘till he is spoken to.’

‘Emory,’ said Estelle, in a tone of assumed calmness, and a look of devilish malice sparkled in her dying eye as she spoke, although her tone was that of supplication, ‘my princi-

pal reason in sending for you in this, my dying hour, was to speak of our child. I do not wish him to curse my memory after I shall have passed away, and all I ask is, that when I am gone, you will when you allude to me in speaking with him, mention me in kindness. Will you do this ?

‘Madam,’ replied Emory, haughtily, ‘I know you never intended that my son should be bred a gentleman, but in spite of all your scheming, I feel happy to say that such will be his breeding. As for you, I have lost no opportunity to impress upon his young mind the vileness of your character. To magnify your crimes would be impossible, but I have tried hard, and I think I have succeeded, in giving him a very fair idea of the nature of the foul wretch who bore him. I own that my endeavors have not produced exactly the effect upon him which I could wish they would, but I trust I shall be enabled before I die to learn him to cordially hate you !’

A laugh wild and unearthly, and uttered so suddenly as to cause Emory to start back in affright, burst from the lips of Estelle. It ended in a deep groan, and then speaking with difficulty, she said derisively—

‘So you won’t speak a good word for me to our boy, eh ? Well, then, I shall have to speak for myself. I shall see him before you do !’

‘Come, come,’ said Emory, impatiently, ‘if you have any confession to make, be about it quickly, for I see that your mind is wandering, and you will be a grinning lunatic before long.’

‘My mind is not wandering,’ answered Estelle, with wonderful calmness, ‘it is as comprehensive and unclouded now as it was the cursed day when I first called you husband, and I tell you that I will see our boy first !’

‘And where will you see him ?’ enquired Emory, laughing derisively.

‘*In hell !*’ yelled Estelle, raising herself upon one elbow, and glaring savagely upon Emory—‘think me not insane, for

right well do I know what I utter, and who is listening to me; and again I say, I shall see our boy in Tophet, where you have sent him, and where he is waiting for me! You are fearful that I will die before I can make a confession. I begin to fear it too, for already I feel death's icy hand upon me—so I will be brief. In the first place, then, the boy whose heart you have been so anxious to fill with hatred for his mother, and with whose education you have been so particular, is not our son!

‘Whose son is he then?’ asked Emory, with nervous agitation.

‘He is the son of my lover, James Ely!’ shouted Estelle exultingly, and our son is——’

She paused, and Emory, upon whose mind a light began to break, seized her tightly by the wrist, and hissed between his set teeth—

‘And our son is whom?’

‘Dick Waffles the thief!’ yelled Estelle, breaking into an hysteric laugh which ended in a swoon, and she fell back upon the bed just as Emory was about to strangle her.

‘Touch her not!’ shouted Harry, seizing tightly hold of Emory—‘would you maltreat a corpse? See, she is dead!’

Emory’s whole frame was convulsed with agony, and sinking into a chair, he buried his face in his hand, and remained silent, tapping the floor the while nervously with the toe of his boot. Harry sprang to the assistance of Estelle, and raising her head, he bathed her temples and nostrils with some spirits of camphor, a small phial containing which he had found upon the mantel-piece.

‘It is not over yet!’ he said, in a subdued tone, as he observed signs of returning animation, ‘she revives!’

Jumping quickly from his apathetic posture, Emory approached the bed, and gazing imploringly upon his wife, he exclaimed—

‘O, Estelle! wife! If you possess consciousness, unsay the

horrible speech to which you have just given utterance, and I will bless instead of cursing you! I will forgive you all—everything—and I will teach our boy to love and respect you! It is not so, is it? Do not die with a lie upon your lips!’

*You will forgive me!’* gasped Estelle, faintly, when she was able to articulate. ‘I suppose, then, I have received no wrongs at your hands, for which you should ask *my* forgiveness! But let that pass: I have not finished my confession yet, and I must do so while I have time. If you wish to see your well-bred and gentlemanly son before you die, keep close watch of the Coroner’s reports in the daily papers, and probably you will read that the body of a boy about sixteen years of age—a thief well known to the police—was found floating in the dock, with a bullet-hole in his breast. There will be nobody present at the inquest to tell who shot him, or how he got in the water, but I will tell you. He was engaged with others in attempting to force an entrance into his father’s house, but his father having been previously notified that such an attempt would be made, prepared himself to meet it, and in his thirst for blood he shot his own son through the body. His companions bore the wounded boy to their vile abode, and there, amid horrible oaths and execrations, he died, cursing the hand that inflicted the wound, and his body was finally thrown by his companions into the dock. Keep him back!’ she shrieked, as Emory, with the look of a maniac, was rushing towards her—‘keep him back! I have not yet finished my confession.’

A desperate struggle took place between Emory and Harry, but the latter being much the stronger of the two, at length forced the angered man into a seat, and Estelle, having recovered breath, proceeded—

‘And now for another important matter. Some weeks since, that boy whose death I have just been describing, while secreted in your house for the purpose of theft, abstracted

certain papers relating to property in Texas, from a tin-box, and brought them to me.'

A new fear was awakened in Emory's mind, as he derisively asked, in a voice of assumed calmness—

'And what use could you possibly make of a *bona fide* deed of conveyance, even if you did get possession of it?'

'None,' returned Estelle, 'but unfortunately for you the deed which I received was a forged one, and wrapped up with it was a written confession of one George Cantwell, (alias Wm. Walker) giving a minute and particular account of the whole transaction. This confession was secreted in the box containing the deed from motives of revenge, by your late *employee*, and the papers are now on their way to the rightful heirs of the murdered Jerome Newman's Texas property.'

The countenance of Emory at this moment was frightful to behold. He saw that all his long cherished hopes were blasted—that he was betrayed—branded with the crimes of murder and forgery—and exposed before a stranger. His eyes rolled round in his head with an expression of lunatic ferocity—his nostrils dilated, his lips quivered, and the white foam oozed from between his set teeth as he struggled to break from the grasp of Harry, who held him with vice-like firmness.

'A moment more,' said Estelle, faintly, 'and my confession will be complete. It was I who brought this about. For the last sixteen years I have toiled for, hoped for, waited for, this blissful moment, and now that it has come, I am ready and willing to die. Emory!' she cried, by a last desperate effort raising herself in bed, and turning her dying eyes savagely upon her husband, 'brutal, black-hearted beast! look upon me, and say am I not terribly revenged? Ha! ha! are you stricken dumb? Have I touched you to the quick? Ha! ha! ha!'

Summoning all his energies, with one desperate exertion, Emory broke from his custodian, and with desperate force rushed at and caught the wretched creature by the throat,

but his fingers clasped the neck of a corpse—for the eye was glazed—the jaw had dropped—and the spirit had passed away with the last effort of worn-out nature. For some moments he maintained his clutch upon the inanimate form, but when he found that she was indeed dead, a sudden desire to revenge himself upon the person who had been a listener to the horrible revelation seized him, and he turned to attack Harry, but that person had left the room to procure assistance, and he found himself alone. ‘Ha!’ he cried, as a look of desperation settled upon his features, ‘he would procure my arrest, but I will baulk him there!’ and springing out of the door, he made his way through the court and down the alley-way into the street, when he started off on a run, and did not stop till he reached the house in which he resided. Letting himself in with his latch-key, he made his way to his library, and locked the door.

He found a letter from Hollowell lying upon his table, and hastily breaking the seal, he read as follows:

“MY DEAR EMORY.—I have thought for some time past that you and I have been associated about long enough, and under this conviction, I have concluded to withdraw myself from your society, and locate myself in some part of the world where I will be enabled to enjoy myself rationally. I have succeeded in netting a very handsome amount, (say five thousand dollars,) in the prosecution of the business upon which you sent me, and this, together with some ten or fifteen thousand which I have obtained upon the property entrusted to me by you is enough to satisfy me at present. I am aware that you possess property in Texas to a large amount, and perhaps an equal dividend between us would make my share larger. I am not greedy, however, and I freely forgive you all indebtedness to me. Trusting that you will always be dealt with as honestly as I have dealt with you, allow me to subscribe myself, my dear Emory,

Yours very truly,

“CORNELIUS HOLLOWELL.”

He threw the letter aside with an expression of contempt, and then taking one of the pistols which he had used on the

night of the attempted burglary from its case, he deliberately loaded it, and then seated himself in his easy chair to reflect. 'I should prefer some other mode of death,' he muttered, 'were it not for the trouble of procuring it. Let me see,' he continued as he laid the pistol upon his lap and pressed his hand upon his throbbing temples, 'could I not send the wench to the druggist to procure—'

But just as he had arrived at this point in his cogitations, the door bell was violently agitated, and springing from his chair, he exclaimed—

'Ah, then, I am too late, and this is my only chance to baffle them!' As he spoke he placed the muzzle of the pistol in his mouth, pulled the trigger, and the next moment his blood and brains bespattered the wall behind him. A contraction of the muscles—a deep groan—a death rattle in the throat—and the spirit of Everard Emory had joined that of his guilty wife. Both were beyond the jurisdiction of human law, but they had flown to the presence of a Judge from whose frown even death could not deliver them. Harry was the principal witness at the separate inquests held upon their bodies, and under his superintendence both were interred in one grave in Greenwood.

CHAPTER XLI.

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LITTLE now remains for the narrator to say. He has only to make a slight allusion to certain of his characters, and the task which he set out to accomplish will be completed.

The widow Wallace received the documents mailed by Harry —— at the request of Estelle, and in due time obtained possession of the property left by her murdered first husband. Her pecuniary wants were few, for she had a happy and contented home with her son-in-law and daughter Helen, but the money enabled her to gratify to the fullest extent her enlarged feelings of philanthropy, as well as to settle a handsome sum upon two little grand-children, who daily made her aged heart beat fast with joy as they gambolled in the sunlight of her happy smiles.

Jack Ainslie left the police department, and was started in a lucrative business by Robert Barker, at whose house he and his wife Mary were constant visitors.

Richard Hamilton and his wife Minnie also kept up the acquaintance which had existed between them and the before-mentioned parties previous to the double marriage, and every

succeeding anniversary of that interesting event was sure to call them all together.

Frank Camp returned to New Orleans a wiser and a better man, and in atonement for his many misdeeds he took upon himself a sort of penance by marrying Miss Lydia Dunlap.

Tony Butters died of a stroke of apoplexy brought on by excitement consequent upon the failure of a heavy speculation in which he had engaged.

Philip Tieman returned to St. Louis and astonished the acquaintances of the Grant family by a recital of what he had witnessed.

The body of Kate O'Donnell was found floating in the East River, she having thrown herself from the dock after rushing from the miserable abode in which Estelle died. The remains were not recognized, and as a matter of course a verdict of 'Found Drowned' was returned by the Coroner's jury.

The despicable old hag, Mother Waffles, dragged out a horrible existence to late old age, and died at last in a miserable cellar, from the combined effects of starvation and cold.

Hollowell never had the pleasure of spending his ill-gotten gains. He was killed by a steamboat explosion on the Ohio river, while on his way from Pittsburgh to Cincinnati.

Two characters remain yet to be spoken of—Cantwell and his paramour Florence. About a year after the death of Estelle, Robert Barker and his wife, together with the son of James Ely, (who after Emory committed suicide had been taken under their protection,) started on a travelling tour South. They stopped on their way in Philadelphia a few days, and while there they visited Moyamensing Prison, where, among the prisoners in the male department, they observed Cantwell busily engaged in making boots, and in the female department the guilty partner of his flight picking

oakum. Upon asking the official who conducted them around the prison, the nature of the offence for which these two miserable creatures were incarcerated, Barker was told that they were notorious panel thieves.

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
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

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
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